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James Lennox.

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
DECLINE AND FALL
OF THE
ROMAN EMPIRE.

By EDWARD GIBBON, Esq.

IN TWELVE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

A NEW EDITION.

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THE

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
DECLINE AND FALL
OF THE
ROMAN EMPIRE.

CHAP. XL

*Reign of Claudius.—Defeat of the Goths.—Victories,
Triumph, and Death, of Aurelian.*

UNDER the deplorable reigns of Valerian CHAP.
XI.
and Gallienus, the empire was oppressed
and almost destroyed by the foldiers, the ty-
rants, and the barbarians. It was faved by a
series of great princes, who derived their obscure
origin from the martial provinces of Illyricum.
Within a period of about thirty years, Claudius,
Aurelian, Probus, Diocletian and his colleagues,
triumphed over the foreign and domestic enemies
of the state, re-established, with the military dis-
cipline, the strength of the frontiers, and deserved
the glorious title of Restorers of the Roman
world.

VOL. II.

B

The

C H A P.
XI.

Aureolus
invades
Italy, is
defeated
and be-
sieged at
Milan.

A.D. 268.

The removal of an effeminate tyrant made way for a succession of heroes. The indignation of the people imputed all their calamities to Gallienus, and the far greater part were, indeed, the consequence of his dissolute manners and careless administration. He was even destitute of a sense of honour, which so frequently supplies the absence of public virtue; and as long as he was permitted to enjoy the possession of Italy, a victory of the barbarians, the loss of a province, or the rebellion of a general, seldom disturbed the tranquil course of his pleasures. At length, a considerable army, stationed on the Upper Danube, invested with the Imperial purple their leader Aureolus; who disdaining a confined and barren reign over the mountains of Rætia, passed the Alps, occupied Milan, threatened Rome, and challenged Gallienus to dispute in the field the sovereignty of Italy. The emperor, provoked by the insult, and alarmed by the instant danger, suddenly exerted that latent vigour, which sometimes broke through the indolence of his temper. Forcing himself from the luxury of the palace, he appeared in arms at the head of his legions, and advanced beyond the Po to encounter his competitor. The corrupted name of Pontirolo^{*} still preserves the memory of a bridge over the Adda, which, during the action, must have proved an

^{*} *Pons Aureoli*, thirteen miles from Bergamo, and thirty-two from Milan. See Cluver. *Italia Antiq.* tom. i. p. 245. Near this place, in the year 1703, the obstinate battle of Cassano was fought between the French and Austrians. The excellent relation of the Chevalier de Folard, who was present, gives a very distinct idea of the ground. See Polybe de Folard, tom. iii. p. 223—248.

object of the utmost importance to both armies. C H A P.
XI.
The Rhætian usurper, after receiving a total defeat and a dangerous wound, retired into Milan. The siege of that great city was immediately formed; the walls were battered with every engine in use among the ancients; and Aureolus, doubtful of his internal strength, and hopeless of foreign succours, already anticipated the fatal consequences of unsuccessful rebellion.

His last resource was an attempt to seduce the loyalty of the besiegers. He scattered libels through their camp, inviting the troops to desert an unworthy master, who sacrificed the public happiness to his luxury, and the lives of his most valuable subjects to the slightest suspicions. The arts of Aureolus diffused fears and discontent among the principal officers of his rival. A conspiracy was formed by Heraclianus the Prætorian præfect, by Marcian, a general of rank and reputation, and by Cecrops, who commanded a numerous body of Dalmatian guards. The death of Gallienus was resolved; and notwithstanding their desire of first terminating the siege of Milan, the extreme danger which accompanied every moment's delay, obliged them to hasten the execution of their daring purpose. At a late hour of the night, but while the emperor still protracted the pleasures of the table, an alarm was suddenly given, that Aureolus, at the head of all his forces, had made a desperate sally from the town; Gallienus, who was never deficient in personal bravery, started from his silken couch, and, without

C H A P.
XI.

A. D. 268,
March 20.
Death of
Gallienus.

allowing himself time either to put on his armour or to assemble his guards, he mounted on horseback, and rode full speed toward the supposed place of the attack. Encompassed by his declared or concealed enemies, he soon, amidst the nocturnal tumult, received a mortal dart from an uncertain hand. Before he expired, a patriotic sentiment rising in the mind of Gallienus, induced him to name a deserving successor, and it was his last request, that the Imperial ornaments should be delivered to Claudius, who then commanded a detached army in the neighbourhood of Pavia. The report at least was diligently propagated, and the order cheerfully obeyed by the conspirators, who had already agreed to place Claudius on the throne. On the first news of the emperor's death, the troops expressed some suspicion and resentment, till the one was removed, and the other assuaged, by a donative of twenty pieces of gold to each soldier. They then ratified the election, and acknowledged the merit of their new sovereign².

Character
and elevation
of the
emperor
Claudius.

The obscurity which covered the origin of Claudius, though it was afterwards embellished by some flattering fictions³, sufficiently betrays

² On the death of Gallienus, see Trebellius Pollio in Hist. August. p. 131. Zosimus, l. i. p. 37. Zonaras, l. xii. p. 634. Eutrop. ix. 11. Aurelius Victor in Epitom. Victor in Cæsar. I have compared and blended them all, but have chiefly followed Aurelius Victor, who seems to have had the best memoirs.

³ Some supposed him, oddly enough, to be a bastard of the younger Gordian. Others took advantage of the province of Dardania, to deduce his origin from Dardanus, and the ancient kings of Troy.

the

the meanness of his birth. We can only discover that he was a native of one of the provinces bordering on the Danube; that his youth was spent in arms, and that his modest valour attracted the favour and confidence of Decius. The senate and people already considered him as an excellent officer, equal to the most important trusts; and censured the inattention of Valerian, who suffered him to remain in the subordinate station of a tribune. But it was not long before that emperor distinguished the merit of Claudius, by declaring him general and chief of the Illyrian frontier, with the command of all the troops in Thrace, Mæsia, Dacia, Pannonia, and Dalmatia, the appointments of the præfect of Egypt, the establishment of the pro-consul of Africa, and the sure prospect of the consulship. By his victories over the Goths, he deserved from the senate the honour of a statue, and excited the jealous apprehensions of Gallienus. It was impossible that a soldier could esteem so dissolute a sovereign, nor is it easy to conceal a just contempt. Some unguarded expressions which dropt from Claudius, were officially transmitted to the royal ear. The emperor's answer to an officer of confidence, describes in very lively colours his own character and that of the times. "There is not any thing capable of giving me more serious concern, than the intelligence contained in your last dispatch*: that some malicious suggestions have

* *Notitia*, a periodical and official dispatch which the emperors received from the *frumentarii*, or agents dispersed through the provinces. Of these we may speak hereafter.

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“indisposed towards us the mind of our friend
 “and *parent* Claudius. As you regard your al-
 “legiance, use every means to appease his re-
 “sentment, but conduct your negotiation with
 “secrecy; let it not reach the knowledge of the
 “Dacian troops; they are already provoked,
 “and it might inflame their fury. I myself have
 “sent him some presents: be it your care that
 “he accept them with pleasure. Above all, let
 “him not suspect that I am made acquainted
 “with his imprudence. The fear of my anger
 “might urge him to desperate counsels.” The
 presents which accompanied this humble epistle,
 in which the monarch solicited a reconciliation
 with his discontented subject, consisted of a con-
 siderable sum of money, a splendid wardrobe,
 and a valuable service of silver and gold plate.
 By such arts Gallienus softened the indignation,
 and dispelled the fears, of his Illyrian general;
 and during the remainder of that reign, the for-
 midable sword of Claudius was always drawn in
 the cause of a master whom he despised. At last,
 indeed, he received from the conspirators the
 bloody purple of Gallienus: but he had been ab-
 sent from their camp and counsels; and however
 he might applaud the deed, we may candidly
 presume that he was innocent of the knowledge
 of it⁶. When Claudius ascended the throne, he
 was about fifty-four years of age.

⁵ Hist. August. p. 208. Gallienus describes the plate, vestments,
 &c. like a man who loved and understood those splendid trifles.

⁶ Julian (Orat. i. p. 6.) affirms that Claudius acquired the empire
 in a just and even holy manner. But we may distrust the partiality of
 a kinsman.

The

The siege of Milan was still continued, and Aureolus soon discovered, that the success of his artifices had only raised up a more determined adversary. He attempted to negotiate with Claudius a treaty of alliance and partition. "Tell him," replied the intrepid emperor, "that such proposals should have been made to Gallienus; he, perhaps, might have listened to them with patience, and accepted a colleague as despicable as himself." This stern refusal, and a last unsuccessful effort, obliged Aureolus to yield the city and himself to the discretion of the conqueror. The judgment of the army pronounced him worthy of death, and Claudius, after a feeble resistance, consented to the execution of the sentence. Nor was the zeal of the senate less ardent in the cause of their new sovereign. They ratified, perhaps with sincere transport of zeal, the election of Claudius; and as his predecessor had shewn himself the personal enemy of their order, they exercised under the name of justice a severe revenge against his friends and family. The senate was permitted to discharge the ungrateful office of punishment, and the emperor reserved for himself the pleasure and merit of obtaining by his intercession a general act of indemnity⁷.

⁷ Hist. August. p. 203. There are some trifling differences concerning the circumstances of the last defeat and death of Aureolus.

⁸ Aureolus Victor in Gallien. The people loudly prayed for the damnation of Gallienus. The senate decreed that his relations and servants should be thrown down headlong from the Gemonian stairs. An obnoxious officer of the revenue had his eyes torn out whilst under examination.

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Clemency
and justice
of Clau-
dius.

Such ostentatious clemency discovers less of the real character of Claudius, than a trifling circumstance in which he seems to have consulted only the dictates of his heart. The frequent rebellions of the provinces had involved almost every person in the guilt of treason, almost every estate in the case of confiscation; and Gallienus often displayed his liberality, by distributing among his officers the property of his subjects. On the accession of Claudius, an old woman threw herself at his feet, and complained that a general of the late emperor had obtained an arbitrary grant of her patrimony. This general was Claudius himself, who had not entirely escaped the contagion of the times. The emperor blushed at the reproach, but deserved the confidence which she had reposed in his equity. The confession of his fault was accompanied with immediate and ample restitution.

He under-
takes the
reforma-
tion of the
army.

In the arduous task which Claudius had undertaken, of restoring the empire to its ancient splendour, it was first necessary to revive among his troops a sense of order and obedience. With the authority of a veteran commander, he represented to them, that the relaxation of discipline had introduced a long train of disorders, the effects of which were at length experienced by the soldiers themselves; that a people ruined by oppression, and indolent from despair, could no longer supply a numerous army with the means of luxury, or even of subsistence; that the danger of each individual had increased with the despotism of the

military order, since princes who tremble on the throne, will guard their safety by the instant sacrifice of every obnoxious subject. The emperor expiated on the mischiefs of a lawless caprice which the soldiers could only gratify at the expence of their own blood; as their seditious elections had so frequently been followed by civil wars, which consumed the flower of the legions either in the field of battle or in the cruel abuse of victory. He painted in the most lively colours the exhausted state of the treasury, the desolation of the provinces, the disgrace of the Roman name, and the insolent triumph of rapacious barbarians. It was against those barbarians, he declared, that he intended to point the first effort of their arms. Tetricus might reign for a while over the West, and even Zenobia might preserve the dominion of the East¹⁰. These usurpers were his personal adversaries; nor could he think of indulging any private resentment till he had saved an empire, whose impending ruin would, unless it was timely prevented, crush both the army and the people.

The various nations of Germany and Sarmatia, who fought under the Gothic standard, had already collected an armament more formidable than any which had yet issued from the Euxine. On the banks of the Niester, one of the great rivers that discharge themselves into that sea, they constructed a fleet of two thousand, or even

A.D. 269.
The Goths
invade the
empire.

¹⁰ Zonaras on this occasion mentions Posthumus; but the registers of the senate (Hist. August. p. 203.) prove that Tetricus was already emperor of the western provinces.

of

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of six thousand vessels"; numbers which, however incredible they may seem, would have been insufficient to transport their pretended army of three hundred and twenty thousand barbarians. Whatever might be the real strength of the Goths, the vigour and success of the expedition were not adequate to the greatness of the preparations. In their passage through the Bosphorus, the unskilful pilots were overpowered by the violence of the current; and while the multitude of their ships were crowded in a narrow channel, many were dashed against each other, or against the shore. The barbarians made several descents on the coasts both of Europe and Asia; but the open country was already plundered, and they were repulsed with shame and loss from the fortified cities which they assaulted. A spirit of discouragement and division arose in the fleet, and some of their chiefs sailed away towards the islands of Crete and Cyprus; but the main body pursuing a more steady course, anchored at length near the foot of mount Athos, and assaulted the city of Thessalonica, the wealthy capital of all the Macedonian provinces. Their attacks, in which they displayed a fierce but artless bravery, were soon interrupted by the rapid approach of Claudius, hastening to a scene of action that deserved the presence of a warlike prince at the head of the remaining powers of the empire. Impatient for battle, the Goths immediately broke up their

" The Augustan history mentions the smaller, Zonaras the larger, number; the lively fancy of Montesquieu induced him to prefer the latter.

camp,

camp, relinquished the siege of Thessalonica, left their navy at the foot of mount Athos, traversed the hills of Macedonia, and pressed forwards to engage the last defence of Italy. C H A P.
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We still possess an original letter addressed by Claudius to the senate and people on this memorable occasion. "Conscript fathers," says the emperor, "know that three hundred and twenty thousand Goths have invaded the Roman territory. If I vanquish them, your gratitude will reward my services. Should I fall, remember that I am the successor of Gallienus. The whole republic is fatigued and exhausted. We shall fight after Valerian, after Ingenuus, Regillianus, Lollianus, Posthumus, Celsus, and a thousand others, whom a just contempt for Gallienus provoked into rebellion. We are in want of darts, of spears, and of shields. The strength of the empire, Gaul, and Spain, are usurped by Tetricus, and we blush to acknowledge that the archers of the East serve under the banners of Zenobia. Whatever we shall perform, will be sufficiently great." The melancholy firmness of this epistle announces a hero careless of his fate, conscious of his danger, but still deriving a well-grounded hope from the resources of his own mind.

Distress
and firm-
ness of
Claudius.

The event surpassed his own expectations and those of the world. By the most signal victories he delivered the empire from this host of barbarians, and was distinguished by posterity under

His victory
over the
Goths.

¹¹ Trebell. Pollio in Hist. August. p. 204.

the

CHAP. the glorious appellation of the Gothic Claudius.
XI. The imperfect historians of an irregular war " do not enable us to describe the order and circumstances of his exploits; but, if we could be indulged in the allusion, we might distribute into three acts this memorable tragedy. I. The decisive battle was fought near Naissus, a city of Dardania. The legions at first gave way, oppressed by numbers, and dismayed by misfortunes. Their ruin was inevitable, had not the abilities of their emperor prepared a seasonable relief. A large detachment rising out of the secret and difficult passes of the mountains, which, by his order, they had occupied, suddenly assailed the rear of the victorious Goths. The favourable instant was improved by the activity of Claudius. He revived the courage of his troops, restored their ranks, and pressed the barbarians on every side. Fifty thousand men are reported to have been slain in the battle of Naissus. Several large bodies of barbarians, covering their retreat with a moveable fortification of waggons, retired, or rather escaped, from the field of slaughter. II. We may presume that some insurmountable difficulty, the fatigue, perhaps, or the disobedience, of the conquerors, prevented Claudius from completing in one day the destruction of the Goths. The war was diffused over the provinces of Mæsia, Thrace, and Macedonia, and its operations drawn out into a variety of marches, sur-

¹ Hist. August. in Claud. Aurelian. et Prob. Zosimus, l. i. p. 18
 —42. Zonaras, l. xii. p. 638. Aurel. Victor in Epitom. Victor Junior in Cæsar. Eutrop. ix. 11. Euseb. in Chron.

prises,

prizes, and tumultuary engagements, as well by sea as by land. When the Romans suffered any loss, it was commonly occasioned by their own cowardice or rashness; but the superior talents of the emperor, his perfect knowledge of the country, and his judicious choice of measures as well as officers, assured on most occasions the success of his arms. The immense booty, the fruit of so many victories, consisted for the greater part of cattle and slaves. A select body of the Gothic youth was received among the Imperial troops; the remainder was sold into servitude; and so considerable was the number of female captives, that every soldier obtained to his share two or three women. A circumstance from which we may conclude, that the invaders entertained some designs of settlement as well as of plunder; since even in a naval expedition they were accompanied by their families. III. The loss of their fleet, which was either taken or sunk, had intercepted the retreat of the Goths. A vast circle of Roman posts, distributed with skill, supported with firmness, and gradually closing towards a common centre, forced the barbarians into the most inaccessible parts of mount Hæmus, where they found a safe refuge, but a very scanty subsistence. During the course of a rigorous winter, in which they were besieged by the emperor's troops, famine and pestilence, desertion and the sword, continually diminished the imprisoned multitude. On the return of spring, nothing appeared in arms except a hardy and desperate band, the remnant

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A.D. 370.

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March.
Death of
the empe-
ror, who
recom-
mends
Aurelian
for his suc-
cessor.

remnant of that mighty host which had embarked at the mouth of the Niefter.

The pestilence which swept away such numbers of the barbarians, at length proved fatal to their conqueror. After a short but glorious reign of two years, Claudius expired at Sirmium, amidst the tears and acclamations of his subjects. In his last illness, he convened the principal officers of the state and army, and in their presence recommended Aurelian, one of his generals, as the most deserving of the throne, and the best qualified to execute the great design which he himself had been permitted only to undertake. The virtues of Claudius, his valour, affability¹⁴, justice, and temperance, his love of fame and of his country, place him in that short list of emperors who added lustre to the Roman purple. Those virtues, however, were celebrated with peculiar zeal and complacency by the courtly writers of the age of Constantine, who was¹⁵ the great grandson of Crispus, the elder brother of Claudius. The voice of flattery was soon taught to repeat, that the Gods, who so hastily had snatched Claudius from the earth, rewarded his merit and piety by the perpetual establishment of the empire in his family¹⁵.

¹⁴ According to Zonaras (l. xii. p. 638.), Claudius, before his death, invested him with the purple; but this singular fact is rather contradicted than confirmed by other writers.

¹⁵ See the life of Claudius by Pollio, and the orations of Mamertinus, Eumenius, and Julian. See likewise the *Cæsars* of Julian, p. 313. In Julian it was not adulation, but superstition and vanity.

Notwith-

Notwithstanding these oracles, the greatness of the Flavian family (a name which it had pleased them to assume) was deferred above twenty years, and the elevation of Claudius occasioned the immediate ruin of his brother Quintilius, who possessed not sufficient moderation or courage to descend into the private station to which the patriotism of the late emperor had condemned him. Without delay or reflection, he assumed the purple at Aquileia, where he commanded a considerable force; and though his reign lasted only seventeen days, he had time to obtain the sanction of the senate, and to experience a mutiny of the troops. As soon as he was informed that the great army of the Danube had invested the well-known valour of Aurelian with Imperial power, he sunk under the fame and merit of his rival; and ordering his veins to be opened, prudently withdrew himself from the unequal contest¹⁶.

The general design of this work will not permit us minutely to relate the actions of every emperor after he ascended the throne, much less to deduce the various fortunes of his private life. We shall only observe, that the father of Aurelian was a peasant of the territory of Sirmium, who occupied a small farm, the property of Aurelius, a rich senator. His warlike son enlisted in the troops as a common soldier, successively

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The at-
tempt and
fall of
Quintilius.

April.

Origin and
services of
Aurelian.

¹⁶ Zosimus, l. i. p. 42. Pollio (Hist. August. p. 207.) allows him virtues, and says, that like Pertinax he was killed by the licentious soldiers. According to Dexippus, he died of a disease.

rose

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rose to the rank of a centurion, a tribune, the præfect of a legion, the inspector of the camp, the general, or, as it was then called, the duke, of a frontier; and at length, during the Gothic war, exercised the important office of commander in chief of the cavalry. In every station he distinguished himself by matchless valour¹⁷, rigid discipline, and successful conduct. He was invested with the consulship by the emperor Valerian, who styles him, in the pompous language of that age, the deliverer of Illyricum, the restorer of Gaul, and the rival of the Scipios. At the recommendation of Valerian, a senator of the highest rank and merit, Ulpius Crinitus, whose blood was derived from the same source as that of Trajan, adopted the Pannonian peasant, gave him his daughter in marriage, and relieved with his ample fortune the honourable poverty which Aurelian had preserved inviolate¹⁸.

Aurelian's
successful
reign.

The reign of Aurelian lasted only four years and about nine months; but every instant of that short period was filled by some memorable achievement. He put an end to the Gothic war, chastised the Germans who invaded Italy, recovered Gaul, Spain, and Britain out of the hands of Tetricus, and destroyed the proud monarchy

¹⁷ Theoclytus (as quoted in the Augustan History, p. 212.) affirms, that in one day he killed, with his own hand, forty-eight Sarmatians, and in several subsequent engagements nine hundred and fifty. This heroic valour was admired by the soldiers, and celebrated in their rude songs, the burden of which was *mille, mille, mille occidit*.

¹⁸ Aëtholius (ap. Hist. August. p. 213.) describes the ceremony of the adoption, as it was performed at Byzantium, in the presence of the emperor and his great officers.

which Zenobia had erected in the East, on the ruins of the afflicted empire.

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His severe
discipline.

It was the rigid attention of Aurelian, even to the minutest articles of discipline, which bestowed such uninterrupted success on his arms. His military regulations are contained in a very concise epistle to one of his inferior officers, who is commanded to enforce them, as he wishes to become a tribune, or as he is desirous to live. Gaming, drinking, and the arts of divination, were severely prohibited. Aurelian expected that his soldiers should be modest, frugal, and laborious; that their armour should be constantly kept bright, their weapons sharp, their clothing and horses ready for immediate service; that they should live in their quarters with chastity and sobriety, without damaging the corn fields, without stealing even a sheep, a fowl, or a bunch of grapes, without exacting from their landlords, either salt, or oil, or wood. "The public allowance," continues the emperor, "is sufficient for their support; their wealth should be collected from the spoil of the enemy, not from the tears of the provincials". A single instance will serve to display the rigour, and even cruelty of Aurelian. One of the soldiers had seduced the wife of his host. The guilty wretch

¹⁹ Hist. August. p. 211. This laconic epistle is truly the work of a soldier; it abounds with military phrases and words, some of which cannot be understood without difficulty. *Ferramenta samita* is well explained by Salmasius. The former of the words means all weapons of offence, and is contrasted with *Arma*, defensive armour. The latter signifies keen and well sharpened.

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was fastened to two trees forcibly drawn towards each other, and his limbs were torn asunder by their sudden separation. A few such examples impressed a salutary consternation. The punishments of Aurelian were terrible; but he had seldom occasion to punish more than once the same offence. His own conduct gave a sanction to his laws, and the seditious legions dreaded a chief who had learned to obey, and who was worthy to command.

He concludes a treaty with the Goths,

The death of Claudius had revived the fainting spirit of the Goths. The troops which guarded the passes of Mount Hæmus, and the banks of the Danube, had been drawn away by the apprehension of a civil war; and it seems probable that the remaining body of the Gothic and Vandalic tribes embraced the favourable opportunity, abandoned their settlements of the Ukraine, traversed the rivers, and swelled with new multitudes the destroying host of their countrymen. Their united numbers were at length encountered by Aurelian, and the bloody and doubtful conflict ended only with the approach of night²⁰. Exhausted by so many calamities, which they had mutually endured and inflicted during a twenty years war, the Goths and the Romans consented to a lasting and beneficial treaty. It was earnestly solicited by the barbarians, and cheerfully ratified by the legions, to whose suffrage the prudence of Aurelian referred the decision of that important question. The

²⁰ Zosim. l. i. p. 45.

Gothic

Gothic nation engaged to supply the armies of Rome with a body of two thousand auxiliaries, consisting entirely of cavalry, and stipulated in return an undisturbed retreat, with a regular market as far as the Danube, provided by the emperor's care, but at their own expence. The treaty was observed with such religious fidelity, that when a party of five hundred men straggled from the camp in quest of plunder, the king or general of the barbarians commanded that the guilty leader should be apprehended and shot to death with darts, as a victim devoted to the sanctity of their engagements. It is, however, not unlikely, that the precaution of Aurelian, who had exacted as hostages the sons and daughters of the Gothic chiefs, contributed something to this pacific temper. The youths he trained in the exercise of arms, and near his own person: to the damsels he gave a liberal and Roman education, and by bestowing them in marriage on some of his principal officers, gradually introduced between the two nations the closest and most endearing connections²¹.

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But the most important condition of peace was understood rather than expressed in the treaty. Aurelian withdrew the Roman forces from Dacia, and tacitly relinquished that great province to the Goths and Vandals²². His manly judgment

and resigns
to them the
province of
Dacia.

²¹ Dexippus (ap. Excerpta Legat. p. 12.) relates the whole transaction under the name of Vandals. Aurelian married one of the Gothic ladies to his general Bonosus, who was able to drink with the Goths and discover their secrets. Hist. August. p. 247.

²² Hist. August. p. 222. Eutrop. ix. 15. Sextus Rufus, c. 9. Lactantius de mortibus Persecutorum, c. 9.

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convinced him of the solid advantages, and taught him to despise the seeming disgrace, of thus contracting the frontiers of the monarchy. The Dacian subjects, removed from those distant possessions which they were unable to cultivate or defend, added strength and populousness to the southern side of the Danube. A fertile territory, which the repetition of barbarous inroads had changed into a desert, was yielded to their industry, and a new province of Dacia still preserved the memory of Trajan's conquests. The old country of that name detained, however, a considerable number of its inhabitants, who dreaded exile more than a Gothic master²³. These degenerate Romans continued to serve the empire, whose allegiance they had renounced by introducing among their conquerors the first notions of agriculture, the useful arts, and the conveniences of civilised life. An intercourse of commerce and language was gradually established between the opposite banks of the Danube; and after Dacia became an independent state, it often proved the firmest barrier of the empire against the invasions of the savages of the North. A sense of interest attached these more settled barbarians to the alliance of Rome, and a permanent interest very frequently ripens into sincere and useful friendship. This various colony, which

²³ The Walachians still preserve many traces of the Latin language, and have boasted, in every age, of their Roman descent. They are surrounded by, but not mixed with, the barbarians. See a Memoir of M. d'Anville on ancient Dacia, in the Academy of Inscriptions, tom. xxx.

filled the ancient province, and was insensibly blended into one great people, still acknowledged the superior renown and authority of the Gothic tribe, and claimed the fancied honour of a Scandinavian origin. At the same time the lucky though accidental resemblance of the name of Gæta, infused among the credulous Goths a vain persuasion, that, in a remote age, their own ancestors, already seated in the Dacian provinces, had received the instructions of Zamolxis, and checked the victorious arms of Sesostris and Darius ²⁴.

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While the vigorous and moderate conduct of Aurelian restored the Illyrian frontier, the nation of the Alemanni ²⁵ violated the conditions of peace, which either Gallienus had purchased, or Claudius had imposed, and, inflamed by their impatient youth, suddenly flew to arms. Forty thousand horse appeared in the field ²⁶; and the numbers of the infantry doubled those of the cavalry ²⁷. The first objects of their avarice were a few cities of the Rætian frontier; but

The Alemannic war.

²⁴ See the first chapter of Jornandes. The Vandals, however, (c. 12.) maintained a short independence between the rivers Marisia and Crisia (Maros and Keres) which fell into the Teiss.

²⁵ Dexippus, p. 7—12. Zosimus, l. i. p. 43. Vopiscus in Aurelian. in Hist. August. However these historians differ in names (Alemanni, Juthungi, and Marcomanni), it is evident that they mean the same people, and the same war; but it requires some care to conciliate and explain them.

²⁶ Cantoclarus, with his usual accuracy, chuses to translate three hundred thousand: his version is equally repugnant to sense and to grammar.

²⁷ We may remark, as an instance of bad taste, that Dexippus applies to the light infantry of the Alemanni, the technical terms proper only to the Grecian phalanx.

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A.D. 270.
September.

their hopes soon rising with success, the rapid march of the Alemanni traced a line of devastation from the Danube to the Po²⁸.

The emperor was almost at the same time informed of the irruption, and of the retreat, of the barbarians. Collecting an active body of troops, he marched with silence and celerity along the skirts of the Hercynian forest; and the Alemanni, laden with the spoils of Italy, arrived at the Danube, without suspecting, that on the opposite bank, and in an advantageous post, a Roman army lay concealed and prepared to intercept their return. Aurelian indulged the fatal security of the barbarians, and permitted about half their forces to pass the river without disturbance and without precaution. Their situation and astonishment gave him an easy victory; his skilful conduct improved the advantage. Disposing the legions in a semi-circular form, he advanced the two horns of the crescent across the Danube, and wheeling them on a sudden towards the centre, inclosed the rear of the German host. The dismayed barbarians, on whatsoever side they cast their eyes, beheld with despair, a wasted country, a deep and rapid stream, a victorious and implacable enemy.

Reduced to this distressed condition, the Alemanni no longer disdained to sue for peace. Aurelian received their ambassadors at the head of his camp, and with every circumstance of

²⁸ In Dexippus, we at present read Rhodanus; M. de Valois very judiciously alters the word to Eridanus.

martial

A MAP of the Parts of
EUROPE and ASIA,
adjacent to
CONSTANTINOPLE.

E of BLACK SEA



...S. ...

martial pomp that could display the greatness and discipline of Rome. The legions stood to their arms in well-ordered ranks and awful silence. The principal commanders, distinguished by the ensigns of their rank, appeared on horseback on either side of the Imperial throne. Behind the throne, the consecrated images of the emperor, and his predecessors²⁹, the golden eagles, and the various titles of the legions, engraved in letters of gold, were exalted in the air on lofty pikes covered with silver. When Aurelian assumed his seat, his manly grace and majestic figure³⁰ taught the barbarians to revere the person as well as the purple of their conqueror. The ambassadors fell prostrate on the ground in silence. They were commanded to rise, and permitted to speak. By the assistance of interpreters they extenuated their perfidy, magnified their exploits, expatiated on the vicissitudes of fortune and the advantages of peace, and, with an ill-timed confidence, demanded a large subsidy, as the price of the alliance which they offered to the Romans. The answer of the emperor was stern and imperious. He treated their offer with contempt, and their demand with indignation, reproached the barbarians, that they were as ignorant of the arts of war as of the laws of peace, and finally dismissed them with the choice only of submitting to his un-

²⁹ The emperor Claudius was certainly of the number; but we are ignorant how far this mark of respect was extended; if to Cæsar and Augustus, it must have produced a very awful spectacle; a long line of the masters of the world.

³⁰ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 270.

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conditioned mercy, or awaiting the utmost severity of his resentment³¹. Aurelian had resigned a distant province to the Goths; but it was dangerous to trust or to pardon these perfidious barbarians, whose formidable power kept Italy itself in perpetual alarms.

The Alemanni invade Italy,

Immediately after this conference, it should seem that some unexpected emergency required the emperor's presence in Pannonia. He devolved on his lieutenants the care of finishing the destruction of the Alemanni, either by the sword, or by the surer operation of famine. But an active despair has often triumphed over the indolent assurance of success. The barbarians, finding it impossible to traverse the Danube and the Roman camp, broke through the posts in their rear, which were more feebly or less carefully guarded; and with incredible diligence, but by a different road, returned towards the mountains of Italy³². Aurelian, who considered the war as totally extinguished, received the mortifying intelligence of the escape of the Alemanni, and of the ravage which they already committed in the territory of Milan. The legions were commanded to follow, with as much expedition as those heavy bodies were capable of exerting, the rapid flight of an enemy, whose infantry and cavalry moved with almost equal swiftness. A few days afterwards the emperor himself marched to the relief of Italy, at the

³¹ Dexippus gives them a subtle and prolix oration, worthy of a Grecian sophist.

³² Hist. August. p. 215.

head

head of a chosen body of auxiliaries (among whom were the hostages and cavalry of the Vandals), and of all the Prætorian guards who had served in the wars on the Danube³³.

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As the light troops of the Alemanni had spread themselves from the Alps to the Appennine, the incessant vigilance of Aurelian and his officers was exercised in the discovery, the attack, and the pursuit of the numerous detachments. Notwithstanding this desultory war, three considerable battles are mentioned, in which the principal force of both armies was obstinately engaged³⁴. The success was various. In the first, fought near Placentia, the Romans received so severe a blow, that according to the expression of a writer extremely partial to Aurelian, the immediate dissolution of the empire was apprehended³⁵. The crafty barbarians, who had lined the woods, suddenly attacked the legions in the dusk of the evening, and, it is most probable, after the fatigue and disorder of a long march. The fury of their charge was irresistible; but at length, after a dreadful slaughter, the patient firmness of the emperor rallied his troops, and restored, in some degree, the honour of his arms. The second battle was fought near Fano in Umbria; on the spot which, five hundred years before, had been fatal to the brother of Hannibal³⁶. Thus far the successful Germans

and are at
last van-
quished by
Aurelian.

³³ Dexippus, p. 12.

³⁴ Victor Junior in Aurelian.

³⁵ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 216.

³⁶ The little river, or rather torrent, of Metaurus near Fano has been immortalized, by finding such an historian as Livy, and such a poet as Horace.

had

CHAP. had advanced along the Æmilian and Flaminian
XI. way, with a design of facking the defenceless
 mistress of the world. But Aurelian, who, watchful for the safety of Rome, still hung on their rear, found in this place the decisive moment, of giving them a total and irretrievable defeat³⁷. The flying remnant of their host was exterminated in a third and last battle near Pavia; and Italy was delivered from the inroads of the Alemanni.

Superstitious ceremonies.

Fear has been the original parent of superstition, and every new calamity urges trembling mortals to deprecate the wrath of their invisible enemies. Though the best hope of the republic was in the valour and conduct of Aurelian, yet such was the public consternation, when the barbarians were hourly expected at the gates of Rome, that, by a decree of the senate, the Sibylline books were consulted. Even the emperor himself, from a motive either of religion or of policy, recommended this salutary measure, chided the tardiness of the senate³⁸, and offered to supply whatever expence, whatever animals, whatever captives of any nation, the gods should require. Notwithstanding this liberal offer, it does not appear, that any human victims expiated with their blood the sins of the Roman people. The Sibylline books enjoined ceremonies of a more harmless nature, processions of priests

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 January
 21.

³⁷ It is recorded by an inscription found at Pezaro. See Gruter. cclxxvi. 3.

³⁸ One should imagine, he said, that you were assembled in a Christian church, not in the temple of all the gods.

in white robes, attended by a chorus of youths and virgins; lustrations of the city and adjacent country; and sacrifices, whose powerful influence disabled the barbarians from passing the mystic ground on which they had been celebrated. However puerile in themselves, these superstitious arts were subservient to the success of the war; and if, in the decisive battle of Fano, the Alemanni fancied they saw an army of spectres combating on the side of Aurelian, he received a real and effectual aid from this imaginary reinforcement³⁹.

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But whatever confidence might be placed in ideal ramparts, the experience of the past, and the dread of the future, induced the Romans to construct fortifications of a grosser and more substantial kind. The seven hills of Rome had been surrounded, by the successors of Romulus, with an ancient wall of more than thirteen miles⁴⁰. The vast inclosure may seem disproportioned to the strength and numbers of the infant state. But it was necessary to secure an

Fortifications of
Rome.

³⁹ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 215, 216. gives a long account of these ceremonies, from the Registers of the senate.

⁴⁰ Plin. Hist. Natur. iii. 5. To confirm our idea, we may observe, that for a long time Mount Cælius was a grove of oaks, and Mount Viminal was overrun with oaks; that in the fourth century, the Aventine was a vacant and solitary retirement; that, till the time of Augustus, the Esquiline was an unwholesome burying-ground; and that the numerous inequalities, remarked by the ancients in the Quirinal, sufficiently prove that it was not covered with buildings. Of the seven hills, the Capitoline and Palatine only, with the adjacent vallies, were the primitive habitation of the Roman people. But this subject would require a dissertation.

ample

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ample extent of pasture and arable land, against the frequent and sudden incursions of the tribes of Latium, the perpetual enemies of the republic. With the progress of Roman greatness, the city and its inhabitants gradually increased, filled up the vacant space, pierced through the useless walls, covered the field of Mars, and, on every side, followed the public highways in long and beautiful suburbs⁴¹. The extent of the new walls, erected by Aurelian, and finished in the reign of Probus, was magnified by popular estimation to near fifty⁴², but is reduced by accurate measurement to about twenty-one miles⁴³. It was a great but melancholy labour, since the defence of the capital betrayed the decline of the monarchy. The Romans of a more prosperous age, who trusted to the arms of the legions the safety of the frontier camps⁴⁴, were very far from entertaining a suspicion, that it would ever become necessary to fortify the seat of empire against the inroads of the barbarians⁴⁵.

Aurelian
suppresses
the two
usurpers.

The victory of Claudius over the Goths, and the success of Aurelian against the Alemanni, had already restored to the arms of Rome their ancient superiority over the barbarous nations

⁴¹ *Exspatiantia testis multas addidere urbes*, is the expression of Pliny.

⁴² *Hist. August.* p. 222. Both Lipsius and Isaac Vossius have eagerly embraced this measure.

⁴³ See Naudini, *Roma Antica*, l. i. c. 8.

⁴⁴ *Tacit. Hist.* iv. 23.

⁴⁵ For Aurelian's walls, see Vopiscus in *Hist. August.* p. 216. 222. Zosimus, l. i. p. 43. Eutropius, ix. 15. Aurel. Victor. in *Aurelian.* Victor Junior in *Aurelian.* Euseb. Hieronym. et Idatius in *Chronic.*

of

of the North. To chastise domestic tyrants, and to re-unite the dismembered parts of the empire, was a task reserved for the second of those warlike emperors. Though he was acknowledged by the senate and people, the frontiers of Italy, Africa, Illyricum, and Thrace, confined the limits of his reign. Gaul, Spain, and Britain, Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor, were still possessed by two rebels, who alone, out of so numerous a list, had hitherto escaped the dangers of their situation; and to complete the ignominy of Rome, these rival thrones had been usurped by women.

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A rapid succession of monarchs had arisen and fallen in the provinces of Gaul. The rigid virtues of Posthumus served only to hasten his destruction. After suppressing a competitor, who had assumed the purple at Mentz, he refused to gratify his troops with the plunder of the rebellious city; and, in the seventh year of his reign, became the victim of their disappointed avarice⁴⁶. The death of Victorinus, his friend and associate, was occasioned by a less worthy cause. The shining accomplishments⁴⁷ of that prince were stained by a

Succession
of usurpers
in Gaul,

⁴⁶ His competitor was Lollianus, or Ælianus, if indeed these names mean the same person. See Tillemont, tom. iii. p. 1177.

⁴⁷ The character of this prince by Julius Aterianus (ap. Hist. August. p. 187.) is worth transcribing, as it seems fair and impartial. Victorino qui post Junium Posthumium Gallias rexit neminem existimo præferendum; non in virtute Trajanum; non Antoninum in clementia; non in gravitate Nervam; non in gubernando ærario Vespasianum; non in Censura totius vitæ ac severitate militari Pertinacem vel Severum. Sed omnia hæc libido et cupiditas voluptatis mulierariæ sic perdidit, ut nemo audeat virtutes ejus in literas mittere quem constat omnium judicio meruisse puniri.

licen-

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licentious passion, which he indulged in acts of violence, with too little regard to the laws of society, or even to those of love⁴⁸. He was slain at Cologne, by a conspiracy of jealous husbands, whose revenge would have appeared more justifiable, had they spared the innocence of his son. After the murder of so many valiant princes, it is somewhat remarkable, that a female for a long time controlled the fierce legions of Gaul, and still more singular, that she was the mother of the unfortunate Victorinus. The arts and treasures of Victoria enabled her successively to place Marius and Tetricus on the throne, and to reign with a manly vigour under the name of those dependent emperors. Money of copper, of silver, and of gold, was coined in her name; she assumed the titles of Augusta and Mother of the Camps: her power ended only with her life; but her life was perhaps shortened by the ingratitude of Tetricus⁴⁹.

The reign
and defeat
of Tetricus.

When, at the instigation of his ambitious patroness, Tetricus assumed the ensigns of royalty, he was governor of the peaceful province of Aquitaine, an employment suited to his character and education. He reigned four or five years over Gaul, Spain, and Britain, the slave and sovereign of a licentious army, whom he dreaded, and by whom he was despised. The valour and fortune of Aurelian at length opened

⁴⁸ He ravished the wife of Attitianus, an *actuary*, or army agent. Hist. August. p. 186. Aurel. Victor in Aurelian.

⁴⁹ Pollio assigns her an article among the thirty tyrants. Hist. August. p. 200.

the

the prospect of a deliverance. He ventured to disclose his melancholy situation, and conjured the emperor to hasten to the relief of his unhappy rival. Had this secret correspondence reached the ears of the soldiers, it would most probably have cost Tetricus his life; nor could he resign the sceptre of the West, without committing an act of treason against himself. He affected the appearances of a civil war, led his forces into the field against Aurelian, posted them in the most disadvantageous manner, betrayed his own counsels to the enemy, and with a few chosen friends deserted in the beginning of the action. The rebel legions, though disordered and dismayed by the unexpected treachery of their chief, defended themselves with desperate valour, till they were cut in pieces almost to a man, in this bloody and memorable battle, which was fought near Chalons in Champagne⁵⁰. The retreat of the irregular auxiliaries, Franks and Batavians⁵¹, whom the conqueror soon compelled or persuaded to repass the Rhine, restored the general tranquillity, and the power of Aurelian was acknow-

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Summer.

⁵⁰ Pollio in Hist. August. p. 196. Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 220. The two Victors, in the lives of Gallienus and Aurelian. Eutrop. ix. 13. Euseb. in Chron. Of all these writers, only the two last (but with strong probability) place the fall of Tetricus before that of Zenobia. M. de Boze (in the Academy of Inscriptions, tom. xxx.) does not wish, and Tillemont (tom. iii. p. 1189.) does not dare, to follow them. I have been fairer than the one, and bolder than the other.

⁵¹ Victor Junior in Aurelian. Eumenius mentions *Batavica*; some critics, without any reason, would fain alter the word to *Bo-gaudica*.

ledged

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ledged from the wall of Antoninus to the columns of Hercules.

As early as the reign of Claudius, the city of Autun, alone and unassisted, had ventured to declare against the legions of Gaul. After a siege of seven months, they stormed and plundered that unfortunate city, already wasted by famine⁵². Lyons, on the contrary, had resisted with obstinate disaffection the arms of Aurelian. We read of the punishment of Lyons⁵³, but there is not any mention of the rewards of Autun. Such, indeed, is the policy of civil war: severely to remember injuries, and to forget the most important services. Revenge is profitable, gratitude is expensive.

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Character
of Zeno-
bia;

Aurelian had no sooner secured the person and provinces of Tetricus, than he turned his arms against Zenobia, the celebrated queen of Palmyra and the East. Modern Europe has produced several illustrious women who have sustained with glory the weight of empire; nor is our own age destitute of such distinguished characters. But if we except the doubtful achievements of Semiramis, Zenobia is perhaps the only female whose superior genius broke through the servile indolence imposed on her sex by the climate and manners of Asia⁵⁴. She claimed her

⁵² Eumen. in Vet. Panegy. iv. 8.

⁵³ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 246. Autun was not restored till the reign of Diocletian. See Eumenius de restaurandis scholis.

⁵⁴ Almost every thing that is said of the manners of Odenathus and Zenobia, is taken from their lives in the Augustan History, by Trebellius Pollio, see p. 192. 198.

descent

descent from the Macedonian kings of Egypt, equalled in beauty her ancestor Cleopatra, and far surpassed that princess in chastity⁵⁵ and valour. Zenobia was esteemed the most lovely as well as the most heroic of her sex. She was of a dark complexion (for in speaking of a lady, these trifles become important). Her teeth were of a pearly whiteness, and her large black eyes sparkled with uncommon fire, tempered by the most attractive sweetness. Her voice was strong and harmonious. Her manly understanding was strengthened and adorned by study. She was not ignorant of the Latin tongue, but possessed in equal perfection the Greek, the Syriac, and the Egyptian languages. She had drawn up for her own use an epitome of oriental history, and familiarly compared the beauties of Homer and Plato, under the tuition of the sublime Longinus.

her beauty
and learn-
ing;

This accomplished woman gave her hand to Odenathus, who, from a private station, raised himself to the dominion of the East. She soon became the friend and companion of a hero. In the intervals of war, Odenathus passionately delighted in the exercise of hunting; he pursued with ardour the wild beasts of the desert, lions, panthers, and bears; and the ardour of Zenobia in that dangerous amusement was not inferior to his own. She had inured her constitution to fatigue, disdained the use of a covered carriage,

her valour.

⁵⁵ She never admitted her husband's embraces but for the sake of posterity. If her hopes were baffled, in the ensuing month she reiterated the experiment.

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generally appeared on horseback in a military habit, and sometimes marched several miles on foot at the head of the troops. The success of Odenathus was in a great measure ascribed to her incomparable prudence and fortitude. Their splendid victories over the Great King, whom they twice pursued as far as the gates of Ctesiphon, laid the foundations of their united fame and power. The armies which they commanded, and the provinces which they had saved, acknowledged not any other sovereigns than their invincible chiefs. The senate and people of Rome revered a stranger who had avenged their captive emperor, and even the insensible son of Valerian accepted Odenathus for his legitimate colleague.

She re-
venges her
husband's
death,

After a successful expedition against the Gothic plunderers of Asia, the Palmyrenian prince returned to the city of Emesa in Syria. Invincible in war, he was there cut off by domestic treason, and his favourite amusement of hunting was the cause, or at least the occasion, of his death⁵⁶. His nephew, Mæonius, presumed to dart his javelin before that of his uncle; and though admonished of his error, repeated the same insolence. As a monarch, and as a sportsman, Odenathus was provoked, took away his horse, a mark of ignominy among the barbarians, and chastised the rash youth by a short confinement. The offence was soon forgot, but the punishment

⁵⁶ Hist. August. p. 192, 193. Zosimus, l. i. p. 36. Zonaras, l. xii. p. 633. The last is clear and probable, the others confused and inconsistent. The text of Syncellus, if not corrupt, is absolute nonsense.

was

was remembered; and Mæonius, with a few daring associates, assassinated his uncle in the midst of a great entertainment. Herod, the son of Odenathus, though not of Zenobia, a young man of a soft and effeminate temper⁵⁷, was killed with his father. But Mæonius obtained only the pleasure of revenge by this bloody deed. He had scarcely time to assume the title of Augustus, before he was sacrificed by Zenobia to the memory of her husband⁵⁸.

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With the assistance of his most faithful friends, she immediately filled the vacant throne, and governed with manly counsels Palmyra, Syria, and the East, above five years. By the death of Odenathus, that authority was at an end which the senate had granted him only as a personal distinction; but his martial widow, disdainful both the senate and Gallienus, obliged one of the Roman generals, who was sent against her, to retreat into Europe, with the loss of his army and his reputation⁵⁹. Instead of the little passions which so frequently perplex a female reign, the steady administration of Zenobia was guided by the most judicious maxims of policy. If it was expedient to pardon, she could calm her resentment; if it was necessary to punish, she could impose silence on the voice of pity. Her

and reigns
over the
East and
Egypt.

⁵⁷ Odenathus and Zenobia often sent him, from the spoils of the enemy, presents of gems and toys, which he received with infinite delight.

⁵⁸ Some very unjust suspicions have been cast on Zenobia, as if she was accessory to her husband's death.

⁵⁹ Hist. August. p. 180, 181.

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strict œconomy was accused of avarice; yet on every proper occasion she appeared magnificent and liberal. The neighbouring states of Arabia, Armenia, and Persia, dreaded her enmity, and solicited her alliance. To the dominions of Odenathus, which extended from the Euphrates to the frontiers of Bithynia, his widow added the inheritance of her ancestors, the populous and fertile kingdom of Egypt. The emperor Claudius acknowledged her merit, and was content, that, while *he* pursued the Gothic war, *she* should assert the dignity of the empire in the East⁶⁰. The conduct, however, of Zenobia was attended with some ambiguity; nor is it unlikely that she had conceived the design of erecting an independent and hostile monarchy. She blended with the popular manners of Roman princes the stately pomp of the courts of Asia, and exacted from her subjects the same adoration that was paid to the successors of Cyrus. She bestowed on her three sons⁶¹ a Latin education, and often shewed them to the troops adorned with the Imperial purple. For herself she reserved the diadem, with the splendid but doubtful title of Queen of the East.

⁶⁰ See in Hist. August. p. 198. Aurelian's testimony to her merit; and for the conquest of Egypt, Zosimus, l. i. p. 39, 40.

⁶¹ Timolaus, Herennianus, and Vaballathus. It is supposed that the two former were already dead before the war. On the last, Aurelian bestowed a small province of Armenia, with the title of King; several of his medals are still extant. See Tillemont, tom. iii. p. 1190.

When

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XI.The expedition of
Aurelian,
A.D. 272.

When Aurelian passed over into Asia, against an adversary whose sex alone could render her an object of contempt, his presence restored obedience to the province of Bithynia, already shaken by the arms and intrigues of Zenobia⁶². Advancing at the head of his legions, he accepted the submission of Ancyra, and was admitted into Tyana, after an obstinate siege, by the help of a perfidious citizen. The generous though fierce temper of Aurelian abandoned the traitor to the rage of the soldiers: a superstitious reverence induced him to treat with lenity the countrymen of Apollonius the philosopher⁶³. Antioch was deserted on his approach, till the emperor, by his salutary edicts, recalled the fugitives, and granted a general pardon to all who, from necessity rather than choice, had been engaged in the service of the Palmyrenian queen. The unexpected mildness of such a conduct reconciled the minds of the Syrians, and, as far as the gates of Emesa, the wishes of the people seconded the terror of his arms⁶⁴.

Zenobia would have ill deserved her reputation, had she indolently permitted the emperor of the West to approach within an hundred miles of her capital. The fate of the East was decided in two great battles; so similar in almost

The emperor defeats the Palmyrenians in the battles of Antioch and Emesa.

⁶² Zosimus, l. i. p. 44.

⁶³ Vopiscus (in Hist. August. p. 217.) gives us an authentic letter, and a doubtful vision of Aurelian. Apollonius of Tyana was born about the same time as Jesus Christ. His life (that of the former) is related in so fabulous a manner by his disciples, that we are at a loss to discover whether he was a sage, an impostor, or a fanatic.

⁶⁴ Zosimus, l. i. p. 46.

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every circumstance, that we can scarcely distinguish them from each other, except by observing that the first was fought near Antioch⁶⁵, and the second near Emesa⁶⁶. In both, the queen of Palmyra animated the armies by her presence, and devolved the execution of her orders on Zabdas, who had already signalized his military talents by the conquest of Egypt. The numerous forces of Zenobia consisted for the most part of light archers, and of heavy cavalry clothed in complete steel. The Moorish and Illyrian horse of Aurelian were unable to sustain the ponderous charge of their antagonists. They fled in real or affected disorder, engaged the Palmyrenians in a laborious pursuit, harassed them by a desultory combat, and at length discomfited this impenetrable but unwieldy body of cavalry. The light infantry, in the mean time, when they had exhausted their quivers, remaining without protection against a closer onset, exposed their naked sides to the swords of the legions. Aurelian had chosen these veteran troops, who were usually stationed on the Upper Danube, and whose valour had been severely tried in the Alemannic war⁶⁷. After the defeat of Emesa, Zenobia found it impossible to collect a third army. As far as the frontier of Egypt, the nations subject to her empire had joined the standard of the

⁶⁵ At a place called Immæ. Eutropius, Sextus Rufus, and Jerome, mention only this first battle.

⁶⁶ Vopiscus, in Hist. August. p. 217. mentions only the second.

⁶⁷ Zosimus, l. i. p. 44—48. His account of the two battles is clear and circumstantial.

conqueror,

conqueror, who detached Probus, the bravest of his generals, to possess himself of the Egyptian provinces. Palmyra was the last resource of the widow of Odenathus. She retired within the walls of her capital, made every preparation for a vigorous resistance, and declared with the intrepidity of a heroine, that the last moment of her reign and of her life should be the same.

Amid the barren deserts of Arabia, a few cultivated spots rise like islands out of the sandy ocean. Even the name of Tadmor, or Palmyra, by its signification in the Syriac as well as in the Latin language, denoted the multitude of palm trees which afforded shade and verdure to that temperate region. The air was pure, and the soil, watered by some invaluable springs, was capable of producing fruit as well as corn. A place possessed of such singular advantages, and situated at a convenient distance⁶³ between the gulph of Persia and the Mediterranean, was soon frequented by the caravans which conveyed to the nations of Europe a considerable part of the rich commodities of India. Palmyra insensibly increased into an opulent and independent city, and connecting the Roman and the Parthian monarchies by the mutual benefits of commerce, was suffered to observe an humble neutrality, till at length, after the victories of Trajan, the little republic sunk into the bosom of

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The state
of Palmyra.

⁶³ It was five hundred and thirty-seven miles from Seleucia, and two hundred and three from the nearest coast of Syria, according to the reckoning of Pliny, who, in a few words (Hist. Natur. v. 21.), gives an excellent description of Palmyra.

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Rome, and flourished more than one hundred and fifty years in the subordinate though honourable rank of a colony. It was during that peaceful period, if we may judge from a few remaining inscriptions, that the wealthy Palmyrenians constructed those temples, palaces, and porticos of Grecian architecture, whose ruins, scattered over an extent of several miles, have deserved the curiosity of our travellers. The elevation of Odenathus and Zenobia appeared to reflect new splendour on their country, and Palmyra, for a while, stood forth the rival of Rome: but the competition was fatal, and ages of prosperity were sacrificed to a moment of glory⁶⁹.

It is besieged by Aurelian,

In his march over the sandy desert between Emesa and Palmyra, the emperor Aurelian was perpetually harassed by the Arabs; nor could he always defend his army, and especially his baggage, from those flying troops of active and daring robbers, who watched the moment of surprise, and eluded the slow pursuit of the legions. The siege of Palmyra was an object far more difficult and important, and the emperor, who, with incessant vigour, pressed the attacks in person, was himself wounded with a dart. "The Roman people," says Aurelian, in an original letter, "speak with contempt of the

⁶⁹ Some English travellers from Aleppo discovered the ruins of Palmyra, about the end of the last century. Our curiosity has since been gratified in a more splendid manner by Messieurs Wood and Dawkins. For the history of Palmyra, we may consult the matterly dissertation of Dr. Halley in the Philosophical Transactions; Lowthorp's Abridgment, vol. iii. p. 518.

"war

“ war which I am waging against a woman. C H A P.
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 “ They are ignorant both of the character and
 “ of the power of Zenobia. It is impossible to
 “ enumerate her warlike preparations, of stones,
 “ of arrows, and of every species of missile weapons. Every part of the walls is provided
 “ with two or three *balistæ*, and artificial fires
 “ are thrown from her military engines. The
 “ fear of punishment has armed her with a desperate courage. Yet still I trust in the protecting deities of Rome, who have hitherto
 “ been favourable to all my undertakings.”

Doubtful, however, of the protection of the gods, and of the event of the siege, Aurelian judged it more prudent to offer terms of an advantageous capitulation; to the queen, a splendid retreat; to the citizens, their ancient privileges. His proposals were obstinately rejected, and the refusal was accompanied with insult.

The firmness of Zenobia was supported by the hope, that in a very short time famine would compel the Roman army to repass the desert; and by the reasonable expectation that the kings of the East, and particularly the Persian monarch, would arm in the defence of their most natural ally. But fortune and the perseverance of Aurelian overcame every obstacle. The death of Sapor, which happened about this time⁷⁰, distracted the councils of Persia, and the inconsiderable succours that attempted to relieve Pal-

who becomes
master of
Zenobia
and of the
city.

⁷⁰ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 218.

⁷¹ From a very doubtful chronology I have endeavoured to extract the most probable date.

myra,

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myra, were easily intercepted either by the arms or the liberality of the emperor. From every part of Syria, a regular succession of convoys safely arrived in the camp, which was increased by the return of Probus with his victorious troops from the conquest of Egypt. It was then that Zenobia resolved to fly. She mounted the fleetest of her dromedaries⁷², and had already reached the banks of the Euphrates, about sixty miles from Palmyra, when she was overtaken by the pursuit of Aurelian's light horse, seized, and brought back a captive to the feet of the emperor. Her capital soon afterwards surrendered, and was treated with unexpected lenity. The arms, horses, and camels, with an immense treasure of gold, silver, silk, and precious stones, were all delivered to the conqueror, who leaving only a garrison of six hundred archers, returned to Emesa, and employed some time in the distribution of rewards and punishments at the end of so memorable a war, which restored to the obedience of Rome those provinces that had renounced their allegiance since the captivity of Valerian.

Behaviour
of Zeno-
bia.

When the Syrian queen was brought into the presence of Aurelian, he sternly asked her, How

⁷² Hist. August. p. 218. Zosimus, l. i. p. 50. Though the camel is a heavy beast of burden, the dromedary, who is either of the same or of a kindred species, is used by the natives of Asia and Africa, on all occasions which require celerity. The Arabs affirm, that he will run over as much ground in one day, as their fleetest horses can perform in eight or ten. See Buffon Hist. Naturelle, tom. xi. p. 222. and Shaw's Travels, p. 167.

she

she had presumed to rise in arms against the emperors of Rome! The answer of Zenobia was a prudent mixture of respect and firmness. "Because I disdained to consider as Roman emperors an Aureolus or a Gallienus. You alone I acknowledge as my conqueror and my sovereign". But as female fortitude is commonly artificial, so it is seldom steady or consistent. The courage of Zenobia deserted her in the hour of trial; she trembled at the angry clamours of the soldiers, who called aloud for her immediate execution, forgot the generous despair of Cleopatra; which she had proposed as her model, and ignominiously purchased life by the sacrifice of her fame and her friends. It was to their counsels which governed the weakness of her sex, that she imputed the guilt of her obstinate resistance; it was on their heads that she directed the vengeance of the cruel Aurelian. The fame of Longinus, who was included among the numerous and perhaps innocent victims of her fear, will survive that of the queen who betrayed, or the tyrant who condemned him. Genius and learning were incapable of moving a fierce unlettered soldier, but they had served to elevate and harmonise the soul of Longinus. Without uttering a complaint, he calmly followed the executioner, pitying his unhappy mistress, and bestowing comfort on his afflicted friends⁷⁴.

⁷³ Pollio in Hist. p. 199.

⁷⁴ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 219. Zosimus, l. i. p. 51.

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Rebellion
and ruin
of Pal-
myra.

Returning from the conquest of the East, Aurelian had already crossed the Streights which divide Europe from Asia, when he was provoked by the intelligence that the Palmyrenians had massacred the governor and garrison which he had left among them, and again erected the standard of revolt. Without a moment's deliberation, he once more turned his face towards Syria. Antioch was alarmed by his rapid approach, and the helpless city of Palmyra felt the irresistible weight of his resentment. We have a letter of Aurelian himself, in which he acknowledges⁷⁵, that old men, women, children, and peasants, had been involved in that dreadful execution, which should have been confined to armed rebellion; and although his principal concern seems directed to the re-establishment of a temple of the Sun, he discovers some pity for the remnant of the Palmyrenians, to whom he grants the permission of rebuilding and inhabiting their city. But it is easier to destroy than to restore. The seat of commerce, of arts, and of Zenobia, gradually sunk into an obscure town, a trifling fortress, and at length a miserable village. The present citizens of Palmyra, consisting of thirty or forty families, have erected their mud cottages within the spacious court of a magnificent temple.

Aurelian
suppresses
the rebel-
lion of
Firmus
in Egypt.

Another and a last labour still awaited the indefatigable Aurelian; to suppress a dangerous though obscure rebel, who, during the revolt of

⁷⁵ Hist. August. p. 219.

Palmyra,

Palmyra, had arisen on the banks of the Nile. Firmus, the friend and ally, as he proudly styled himself, of Odenathus and Zenobia, was no more than a wealthy merchant of Egypt. In the course of his trade to India, he had formed very intimate connexions with the Saracens and the Blemmyes, whose situation on either coast of the Red Sea gave them an easy introduction into the Upper Egypt. The Egyptians he inflamed with the hope of freedom, and, at the head of their furious multitude, broke into the city of Alexandria, where he assumed the Imperial purple, coined money, published edicts, and raised an army, which, as he vainly boasted, he was capable of maintaining from the sole profits of his paper trade. Such troops were a feeble defence against the approach of Aurelian; and it seems almost unnecessary to relate, that Firmus was routed, taken, tortured, and put to death. Aurelian might now congratulate the senate, the people, and himself, that in little more than three years he had restored universal peace and order to the Roman world⁷⁶.

Since the foundation of Rome, no general had more nobly deserved a triumph than Aurelian; nor was a triumph ever celebrated with superior

A. D. 274.
Triumph
of Aure-
lian.

⁷⁶ See Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 220. 242. As an instance of luxury, it is observed, that he had glass windows. He was remarkable for his strength and appetite, his courage and dexterity. From the letter of Aurelian, we may justly infer, that Firmus was the head of the rebels, and consequently that Tetricus was already suppressed.

pride

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pride and magnificence". The pomp was opened by twenty elephants, four royal tigers, and above two hundred of the most curious animals from every climate of the North, the East, and the South. They were followed by sixteen hundred gladiators, devoted to the cruel amusement of the amphitheatre. The wealth of Asia, the arms and ensigns of so many conquered nations, and the magnificent plate and wardrobe of the Syrian queen, were disposed in exact symmetry or artful disorder. The ambassadors of the most remote parts of the earth, of Æthiopia, Arabia, Persia, Bactriana, India, and China, all remarkable by their rich or singular dresses, displayed the fame and power of the Roman emperor, who exposed likewise to the public view the presents that he had received, and particularly a great number of crowns of gold, the offerings of grateful cities. The victories of Aurelian were attested by the long train of captives who reluctantly attended his triumph, Goths, Vandals, Sarmatians, Alemanni, Franks, Gauls, Syrians, and Egyptians. Each people was distinguished by its peculiar inscription, and the title of Amazons was bestowed on ten martial heroines of the Gothic nation who had been taken in arms". But every eye, disregarding

79 See the triumph of Aurelian, described by Vopiscus. He relates the particulars with his usual minuteness; and, on this occasion, they *happen* to be interesting. Hist. August. 220.

78 Among barbarous nations, women have often combated by the side of their husbands. But it is *almost* impossible, that a society of Amazons should ever have existed either in the old or new world.

the

the crowd of captives, was fixed on the emperor Tetricus, and the queen of the East. The former, as well as his son, whom he had created Augustus, was dressed in Gallic trowsers⁷⁹, a saffron tunic, and a robe of purple. The beautiful figure of Zenobia was confined by fetters of gold; a slave supported the gold chain which encircled her neck, and she almost fainted under the intolerable weight of jewels. She preceded on foot the magnificent chariot, in which she once hoped to enter the gates of Rome. It was followed by two other chariots, still more sumptuous, of Odenathus and of the Persian monarch. The triumphal car of Aurelian (it had formerly been used by a Gothic king) was drawn on this memorable occasion, either by four stags or by four elephants⁸⁰. The most illustrious of the senate, the people, and the army, closed the solemn procession. Unfeigned joy, wonder, and gratitude, swelled the acclamations of the multitude; but the satisfaction of the senate was clouded by the appearance of Tetricus; nor could they suppress a rising murmur, that the haughty emperor should thus expose to public

⁷⁹ The use of *bracæ*, breeches, or trowsers, was still considered in Italy as a Gallic and Barbarian fashion. The Romans, however, had made great advances towards it. To encircle the legs and thighs with *fasciæ*, or bands, was understood, in the time of Pompey and Horace, to be a proof of ill-health and effeminacy. In the age of Trajan, the custom was confined to the rich and luxurious. It gradually was adopted by the meanest of the people. See a very curious note of Casaubon, ad Sueton. in August. c. 82.

⁸⁰ Most probably the former; the latter, seen on the medals of Aurelian, only denote (according to the learned Cardinal Norris) an oriental victory.

igno-

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XI.

His treat-
ment of
Tetricus
and Zeno-
bia.

ignominy the person of a Roman and a magistrate⁸¹.

But however, in the treatment of his unfortunate rivals, Aurelian might indulge his pride, he behaved towards them with a generous clemency, which was seldom exercised by the ancient conquerors. Princes who, without success, had defended their throne or freedom, were frequently strangled in prison, as soon as the triumphal pomp ascended the Capitol. These usurpers, whom their defeat had convicted of the crime of treason, were permitted to spend their lives in affluence and honourable repose. The emperor presented Zenobia with an elegant villa at Tibur, or Tivoli, about twenty miles from the capital; the Syrian queen insensibly sunk into a Roman matron, her daughters married into noble families, and her race was not yet extinct in the fifth century⁸². Tetricus and his son were re-instated in their rank and fortunes. They erected on the Cælian hill a magnificent palace, and as soon as it was finished, invited Aurelian to supper. On his entrance, he was agreeably surprised with a picture which represented their singular history. They were delineated offering to the emperor a civic crown and the sceptre of Gaul, and again receiving at his hands the orna-

⁸¹ The expression of Calphurnius (*Eclog.* i. 50.), *Nullo ducet captiva triumphos*, as applied to Rome, contains a very manifest allusion and censure.

⁸² Vopiscus in *Hist. August.* p. 199. Hieronym. in *Chron.* Prosper in *Chron.* Baronius supposes that Zenobius, bishop of Florence in the time of St. Ambrose, was of her family.

ments

ments of the senatorial dignity. The father was afterwards invested with the government of Lucania⁸³, and Aurelian, who soon admitted the abdicated monarch to his friendship and conversation, familiarly asked him, Whether it were not more desirable to administer a province of Italy, than to reign beyond the Alps? The son long continued a respectable member of the senate; nor was there any one of the Roman nobility more esteemed by Aurelian, as well as by his successors⁸⁴.

So long and so various was the pomp of Aurelian's triumph, that although it opened with the dawn of day, the slow majesty of the procession ascended not the Capitol before the ninth hour; and it was already dark when the emperor returned to the palace. The festival was protracted by theatrical representations, the games of the circus, the hunting of wild beasts, combats of gladiators, and naval engagements. Liberal donatives were distributed to the army and people, and several institutions, agreeable or beneficial to the city, contributed to perpetuate the glory of Aurelian. A considerable portion of his oriental spoils was consecrated to the gods of Rome; the Capitol, and every other temple, glittered with the offerings of his ostentatious piety; and the temple of the Sun alone received

His magnificence and devotion.

⁸³ Vopisc. in Hist. August. p. 222. Eutropius, ix. 13. Victor Junior. But Pollio, in Hist. August. p. 196, says, that Tetricus was made corrector of all Italy.

⁸⁴ Hist. August. p. 197.

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above fifteen thousand pounds of gold⁸⁵. This last was a magnificent structure, erected by the emperor on the side of the Quirinal hill, and dedicated, soon after the triumph, to that deity whom Aurelian adored as the parent of his life and fortunes. His mother had been an inferior priestess in a chapel of the Sun; a peculiar devotion to the god of Light, was a sentiment which the fortunate peasant imbibed in his infancy; and every step of his elevation, every victory of his reign, fortified superstition by gratitude⁸⁶.

He suppresses a
 sedition at
 Rome.

The arms of Aurelian had vanquished the foreign and domestic foes of the Republic. We are assured, that, by his salutary rigour, crimes and factions, mischievous arts and pernicious connivance, the luxuriant growth of a feeble and oppressive government, were eradicated throughout the Roman world⁸⁷. But if we attentively reflect how much swifter is the progress of corruption than its cure, and if we remember that the years abandoned to public disorders exceeded the months allotted to the martial reign of Aurelian, we must confess that a few short intervals of peace were insufficient for the arduous work

⁸⁵ Vopiscus in Hist. August. 222. Zosimus, l. i. p. 56. He placed in it the images of Belus and of the Sun, which he had brought from Palmyra. It was dedicated in the fourth year of his reign (Euseb. in Chron.), but was most assuredly begun immediately on his accession.

⁸⁶ See in the Augustan History, p. 210, the omens of his fortune. His devotion to the Sun appears in his letters, on his medals, and is mentioned in the Cæsars of Julian. *Commentaire de Spanheim*, p. 109.

⁸⁷ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 222.

of

of reformation. Even his attempt to restore the integrity of the coin, was opposed by a formidable insurrection. The emperor's vexation breaks out in one of his private letters: "Surely," says he, "the gods have decreed that my life should be a perpetual warfare. A sedition within the walls has just now given birth to a very serious civil war. The workmen of the mint, at the instigation of Felicissimus, a slave to whom I had intrusted an employment in the finances, have risen in rebellion. They are at length suppressed; but seven thousand of my soldiers have been slain in the contest, of those troops whose ordinary station is in Dacia, and the camps along the Danube".

Other writers, who confirm the same fact, add likewise, that it happened soon after Aurelian's triumph; that the decisive engagement was fought on the Cælian hill; that the workmen of the mint had adulterated the coin; and that the emperor restored the public credit, by delivering out good money in exchange for the bad, which the people was commanded to bring into the treasury.

We might content ourselves with relating this extraordinary transaction, but we cannot dissimble how much in its present form it appears to us inconsistent and incredible. The debasement of the coin is indeed well suited to the administration of Gallienus; nor is it unlikely that the

Observations upon it.

⁸⁸ Hist. August. p. 222. Aurelian calls those soldiers *Hiberi Riparienses, Castrani*, and *Dacici*.

⁸⁹ Zosimus, l. i. p. 56. Eutropius, ix. 24. Aurel. Victor.

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instruments of the corruption might dread the inflexible justice of Aurelian. But the guilt, as well as the profit, must have been confined to a few; nor is it easy to conceive by what arts they could arm a people whom they had injured, against a monarch whom they had betrayed. We might naturally expect, that such miscreants should have shared the public detestation, with the informers and the other ministers of oppression; and that the reformation of the coin should have been an action equally popular with the destruction of those obsolete accounts, which by the emperor's orders were burnt in the forum of Trajan⁹⁰. In an age when the principles of commerce were so imperfectly understood, the most desirable end might perhaps be effected by harsh and injudicious means; but a temporary grievance of such a nature can scarcely excite and support a serious civil war. The repetition of intolerable taxes, imposed either on the land or on the necessities of life, may at last provoke those who will not, or who cannot, relinquish their country. But the case is far otherwise in every operation which, by whatsoever expedients, restores the just value of money. The transient evil is soon obliterated by the permanent benefit, the loss is divided among multitudes; and if a few wealthy individuals experience a sensible diminution of treasure, with their riches, they at the same time lose the degree of weight and importance which they derived from the posses-

⁹⁰ Hist. August. p. 222. Aurel. Victor.

sion

sion of them. However Aurelian might chuse to disguise the real cause of the insurrection, his reformation of the coin could only furnish a faint pretence to a party already powerful and discontented. Rome, though deprived of freedom, was distracted by faction. The people, towards whom the emperor, himself a plebeian, always expressed a peculiar fondness, lived in perpetual dissention with the senate, the equestrian order, and the Prætorian guards⁹¹. Nothing less than the firm though secret conspiracy of those orders, of the authority of the first, the wealth of the second, and the arms of the third, could have displayed a strength capable of contending in battle with the veteran legions of the Danube, which, under the conduct of a martial sovereign, had atchieved the conquest of the West and of the East.

Whatever was the cause of the object of this rebellion, imputed with so little probability to the workmen of the mint, Aurelian used his victory with unrelenting rigour⁹². He was naturally of a severe disposition. A peasant and a soldier, his nerves yielded not easily to the impressions of sympathy, and he could sustain without emotion the sight of tortures and death. Trained from his earliest youth in the exercise

Cruelty of
Aurelian.

⁹¹ It already raged before Aurelian's return from Egypt. See Vopiscus, who quotes an original letter. Hist. August. p. 244.

⁹² Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 222. The two Victors. Eutropius, ix. 14. Zosimus (l. i. p. 43.) mentions only three senators, and places their death before the eastern war.

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of arms, he set too small a value on the life of a citizen, chastised by military execution the slightest offences, and transferred the stern discipline of the camp into the civil administration of the laws. His love of justice often became a blind and furious passion; and whenever he deemed his own or the public safety endangered, he disregarded the rules of evidence, and the proportion of punishments. The unprovoked rebellion with which the Romans rewarded his services, exasperated his haughty spirit. The noblest families of the capital were involved in the guilt or suspicion of this dark conspiracy. A hasty spirit of revenge urged the bloody prosecution, and it proved fatal to one of the nephews of the emperor. The executioners (if we may use the expression of a contemporary poet) were fatigued, the prisons were crowded, and the unhappy senate lamented the death or absence of its most illustrious members⁹³. Nor was the pride of Aurelian less offensive to that assembly than his cruelty. Ignorant or impatient of the restraints of civil institutions, he disdained to hold his power by any other title than that of the sword, and governed by right of conquest an empire which he had saved and subdued⁹⁴.

93 *Nulla catenati feralis pompa senatus
Carnificum lassabit opus; nec carcere pleno
Infelix raros numerabit curia Patres.*

Calphurn. Eclog. i. 60.

94 According to the younger Victor, he sometimes wore the diadem. *Deus* and *Dominus* appear on his medals.

It was observed by one of the most sagacious of the Roman princes, that the talents of his predecessor Aurelian, were better suited to the command of an army, than to the government of an empire⁹⁵. Conscious of the character in which Nature and experience had enabled him to excel, he again took the field a few months after his triumph. It was expedient to exercise the restless temper of the legions in some foreign war, and the Persian monarch, exulting in the shame of Valerian, still braved with impunity the offended majesty of Rome. At the head of an army, less formidable by its numbers than by its discipline and valour, the emperor advanced as far as the Streights which divide Europe from Asia. He there experienced, that the most absolute power is a weak defence against the effects of despair. He had threatened one of his secretaries who was accused of extortion; and it was known that he seldom threatened in vain. The last hope which remained for the criminal, was to involve some of the principal officers of the army in his danger, or at least in his fears. Artfully counterfeiting his master's hand, he shewed them, in a long and bloody list, their own names devoted to death. Without suspecting or examining the fraud, they resolved to secure their lives by the murder of the emperor. On his march, between Byzantium and Heraclea, Aurelian was suddenly attacked by the conspira-

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XL.He marches
into the
East, and
is assassi-
nated.A. D. 274-
October.

⁹⁵ It was the observation of Diocletian. See Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 224.

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tors, whose stations gave them a right to surround his person, and, after a short resistance, fell by the hand of Mucapor, a general whom he had always loved and trusted. He died regretted by the army, detested by the senate, but universally acknowledged as a warlike and fortunate prince, the useful though severe reformer of a degenerate state⁹⁶.

A.D. 275.
 January.

⁹⁶ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 221. Zosimus, l. i. p. 57. Eutrop. ix. 15. The two Victors.

C H A P. XII.

Conduct of the Army and Senate after the Death of Aurelian.—Reigns of Tacitus, Probus, Carus, and his Sons.

SUCH was the unhappy condition of the Roman emperors, that, whatever might be their conduct, their fate was commonly the same. A life of pleasure or virtue, of severity or mildness, of indolence or glory, alike led to an untimely grave; and almost every reign is closed by the same disgusting repetition of treason and murder. The death of Aurelian, however, is remarkable by its extraordinary consequences. The legions admired, lamented, and revenged, their victorious chief. The artifice of his perfidious secretary was discovered and punished. The deluded conspirators attended the funeral of their injured sovereign, with sincere or well-feigned contrition, and, submitted to the unanimous resolution of the military order, which was signified by the following epistle: “The brave and fortunate
“armies to the senate and people of Rome.
“The crime of one man, and the error of many,
“have deprived us of the late emperor Aurelian.
“May it please you, venerable lords and fathers!
“to place him in the number of the gods, and
“to appoint a successor whom your judgment
“shall declare worthy of the Imperial purple!
“None of those, whose guilt or misfortune have

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Extraordi-
nary con-
test be-
tween the
army and
the senate
for the
choice of
an emperor.

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" contributed to our loss, shall ever reign over us." The Roman senators heard, without surprise, that another emperor had been assassinated in his camp; they secretly rejoiced in the fall of Aurelian; but the modest and dutiful address of the legions, when it was communicated in full assembly by the consul, diffused the most pleasing astonishment. Such honours as fear and perhaps esteem could extort, they liberally poured forth on the memory of their deceased sovereign. Such acknowledgments as gratitude could inspire, they returned to the faithful armies of the republic, who entertained so just a sense of the legal authority of the senate in the choice of an emperor. Yet, notwithstanding this flattering appeal, the most prudent of the assembly declined exposing their safety and dignity to the caprice of an armed multitude. The strength of the legions was, indeed, a pledge of their sincerity, since those who may command are seldom reduced to the necessity of dissembling; but could it naturally be expected, that a hasty repentance, would correct the inveterate habits of fourscore years? Should the soldiers relapse into their accustomed seditions, their insolence might disgrace the majesty of the senate, and prove fatal to the object of its choice. Motives like these dictated a decree, by which the election of a new emperor was referred to the suffrage of the military order.

* Vopiscus in *Hist. Augusta*. p. 222. Aurelius Victor mentions a formal deputation from the troops to the senate.

The

The contention that ensued is one of the best attested, but most improbable events in the history of mankind*. The troops, as if satiated with the exercise of power, again conjured the senate to invest one of its own body with the Imperial purple. The senate still persisted in its refusal; the army in its request. The reciprocal offer was pressed and rejected at least three times, and whilst the obstinate modesty of either party was resolved to receive a master from the hands of the other, eight months insensibly elapsed: an amazing period of tranquil anarchy, during which the Roman world remained without a sovereign, without an usurper, and without a sedition. The generals and magistrates appointed by Aurelian continued to execute their ordinary functions; and it is observed, that a proconsul of Asia was the only considerable person removed from his office, in the whole course of the interregnum.

An event somewhat similar, but much less authentic, is supposed to have happened after the death of Romulus, who, in his life and character, bore some affinity with Aurelian. The throne was vacant during twelve months, till the election of a Sabine philosopher, and the public peace was guarded in the same manner, by the union of the several orders of the state. But, in the

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XII.

A.D. 275.

Feb. 3.

A peaceful
interreg-
num of
eight
months.

* Vopiscus, our principal authority, wrote at Rome, sixteen years only after the death of Aurelian; and, besides the recent notoriety of the facts, constantly draws his materials from the Journals of the Senate, and the original papers of the Ulpian library. Zosimus and Zonaras appear as ignorant of this transaction as they were in general of the Roman constitution,

time

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time of Numa and Romulus, the arms of the people were controlled by the authority of the Patricians; and the balance of freedom was easily preserved in a small and virtuous community². The decline of the Roman state, far different from its infancy, was attended with every circumstance that could banish from an interregnum the prospect of obedience and harmony: an immense and tumultuous capital, a wide extent of empire, the servile equality of despotism, an army of four hundred thousand mercenaries, and the experience of frequent revolutions. Yet, notwithstanding all these temptations, the discipline and memory of Aurelian still restrained the seditious temper of the troops, as well as the fatal ambition of their leaders. The flower of the legions maintained their stations on the banks of the Bosphorus, and the Imperial standard awed the less powerful camps of Rome and of the provinces. A generous though transient enthusiasm seemed to animate the military order; and we may hope that a few real patriots cultivated the returning friendship of the army and the senate, as the only expedient capable of restoring the republic to its ancient beauty and vigour.

A.D. 275.
Sept. 25.
The consul assembles the senate.

On the twenty-fifth of September, near eight months after the murder of Aurelian, the consul convoked an assembly of the senate, and reported

² Liv. i. 27. Dionys. Halicarn. l. ii. p. 125. Plutarch in Numa, p. 60. The first of these writers relates the story like an orator, the second like a lawyer, and the third like a moralist, and none of them probably without some intermixture of fable.

the

the doubtful and dangerous situation of the empire. He slightly insinuated, that the precarious loyalty of the soldiers depended on the chance of every hour, and of every accident; but he represented, with the most convincing eloquence, the various dangers that might attend any farther delay in the choice of an emperor. Intelligence, he said, was already received, that the Germans had passed the Rhine, and occupied some of the strongest and most opulent cities of Gaul. The ambition of the Persian king kept the East in perpetual alarms; Egypt, Africa, and Illyricum, were exposed to foreign and domestic arms, and the levity of Syria would prefer even a female sceptre to the sanctity of the Roman laws. The consul then addressing himself to Tacitus, the first of the senators*, required his opinion on the important subject of a proper candidate for the vacant throne.

If we can prefer personal merit to accidental greatness, we shall esteem the birth of Tacitus more truly noble than that of kings. He claimed his descent from the philosophic historian, whose writings will instruct the last generations of mankind†. The senator Tacitus was then seventy-

Character
of Tacitus.

* Vopiscus (in Hist. August. p. 227.) calls him 'primæ sententiæ consularis;' and soon afterwards *Princeps senatus*. It is natural to suppose, that the monarchs of Rome, disdaining that humble title, resigned it to the most ancient of the senators.

† The only objection to this genealogy is, that the historian was named Cornelius, the emperor, Claudius. But under the lower empire, surnames were extremely various and uncertain.

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five years of age⁶. The long period of his innocent life was adorned with wealth and honours. He had twice been invested with the consular dignity⁷, and enjoyed with elegance and sobriety his ample patrimony of between two and three millions sterling⁸. The experience of so many princes, whom he had esteemed or endured, from the vain follies of Elagabalus to the useful rigour of Aurelian, taught him to form a just estimate of the duties, the dangers, and the temptations, of their sublime station. From the assiduous study of his immortal ancestor he derived the knowledge of the Roman constitution, and of human nature⁹. The voice of the people had already named Tacitus as the citizen the most worthy of empire. The ungrateful rumour reached his ears, and induced him to seek the retirement of one of his villas in Campania. He had passed two months in the delightful privacy of Baia, when he reluctantly obeyed the sum-

⁶ Zonaras, l. xii. p. 637. The Alexandrian Chronicle, by an obvious mistake, transfers that age to Aurelian.

⁷ In the year 273, he was ordinary consul. But he must have been Suffectus many years before, and most probably under Valerian.

⁸ *Bis millia octingenties*. Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 229. This sum, according to the old standard, was equivalent to eight hundred and forty thousand Roman pounds of silver, each of the value of three pounds sterling. But in the age of Tacitus, the coin had lost much of its weight and purity.

⁹ After his accession, he gave orders that ten copies of the historian should be annually transcribed and placed in the public libraries. The Roman libraries have long since perished, and the most valuable part of Tacitus was preserved in a single MS. and discovered in a monastery of Westphalia. See Bayle, Dictionnaire, Art. *Tacite*, and Lippus ad Annal. ii. 9.

mons of the consul to resume his honourable place in the senate, and to assist the republic with his counsels on this important occasion.

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He arose to speak, when, from every quarter of the house, he was saluted with the names of Augustus and Emperor. " Tacitus Augustus, the gods preserve thee, we chuse thee for our sovereign, to thy care we intrust the republic and the world. Accept the empire from the authority of the senate. It is due to thy rank, to thy conduct, to thy manners." As soon as the tumult of acclamations subsided, Tacitus attempted to decline the dangerous honour, and to express his wonder, that they should elect his age and infirmities to succeed the martial vigour of Aurelian. " Are these limbs, conscript fathers! fitted to sustain the weight of armour, or to practise the exercises of the camp? The variety of climates, and the hardships of a military life, would soon oppress a feeble constitution, which subsists only by the most tender management. My exhausted strength scarcely enables me to discharge the duty of a senator; how insufficient would it prove to the arduous labours of war and government? Can you hope, that the legions will respect a weak old man, whose days have been spent in the shade of peace and retirement? Can you desire that I should ever find reason to regret the favourable opinion of the senate?"

He is elected emperor,

The reluctance of Tacitus, and it might possibly be sincere, was encountered by the affectionate

and accepts the purple.

¹⁰ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 227.

tionate

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tionate obstinacy of the senate. Five hundred voices repeated at once, in eloquent confusion, that the greatest of the Roman princes, Numa, Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines, had ascended the throne in a very advanced season of life; that the mind, not the body, a sovereign, not a foldier, was the object of their choice; and that they expected from him no more than to guide by his wisdom the valour of the legions. These pressing though tumultuary instances were seconded by a more regular oration of Metius Falconius, the next on the consular bench to Tacitus himself. He reminded the assembly of the evils which Rome had endured from the vices of headstrong and capricious youths, congratulated them on the election of a virtuous and experienced senator, and, with a manly, though perhaps a selfish, freedom, exhorted Tacitus to remember the reasons of his elevation, and to seek a successor, not in his own family, but in the republic. The speech of Falconius was enforced by a general acclamation. The emperor elect submitted to the authority of his country, and received the voluntary homage of his equals. The judgment of the senate was confirmed by the consent of the Roman people, and of the Prætorian guards¹¹.

Authority
of the se-
nate.

The administration of Tacitus was not unworthy of his life and principles. A grateful servant of the senate, he considered that national

¹¹ Hist. August. p. 228. Tacitus addressed the Prætorians by the appellation of *sanctissimi milites*, and the people by that of *sacratissimi Quirites*.

council

council as the author, and himself as the subject, of the laws¹². He studied to heal the wounds which Imperial pride, civil discord, and military violence, had inflicted on the constitution, and to restore, at least, the image of the ancient republic, as it had been preserved by the policy of Augustus, and the virtues of Trajan and the Antonines. It may not be useless to recapitulate some of the most important prerogatives which the senate appeared to have regained by the election of Tacitus¹³. 1. To invest one of their body, under the title of emperor, with the general command of the armies, and the government of the frontier provinces. 2. To determine the list, or as it was then styled, the College of Consuls. They were twelve in number, who, in successive pairs, each, during the space of two months, filled the year, and represented the dignity of that ancient office. The authority of the senate, in the nomination of the consuls, was exercised with such independent freedom, that no regard was paid to an irregular request of the emperor in favour of his brother Florianus. "The senate," exclaimed Tacitus, with the honest transport of a patriot, "understand the character of a prince whom they have chosen."

¹² In his manumissions he never exceeded the number of an hundred, as limited by the Caninian law, which was enacted under Augustus, and at length repealed by Justinian. See Casaubon ad locum Vopisci.

¹³ See the lives of Tacitus, Florianus, and Probus, in the Augustan History; we may be well assured, that whatever the soldier gave, the senator had already given.

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3. To appoint the proconsuls and presidents of the provinces, and to confer on all the magistrates their civil jurisdiction. 4. To receive appeals through the intermediate office of the præfect of the city from all the tribunals of the empire. 5. To give force and validity, by their decrees, to such as they should approve of the emperor's edicts. 6. To these several branches of authority we may add some inspection over the finances, since, even in the stern reign of Aurelian, it was in their power to divert a part of the revenue from the public service²⁴.

Their joy
and confidence.

Circular epistles were sent without delay to all the principal cities of the empire, Treves, Milan, Aquileia, Theſſalonica, Corinth, Athens, Antioch, Alexandria, and Carthage, to claim their obedience, and to inform them of the happy revolution, which had restored the Roman senate to its ancient dignity. Two of these epistles are still extant. We likewise possess two very singular fragments of the private correspondence of the senators on this occasion. They discover the most excessive joy, and the most unbounded hopes. "Cast away your indolence," it is thus that one of the senators addresses his friend, "emerge from your retirements of Baiæ and Puteoli. Give yourself to the city, to the senate. Rome flourishes, the whole republic flourishes. Thanks to the Roman army, to an army truly Roman; at length, we have re-

²⁴ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 216. The passage is perfectly clear; yet both Casaubon and Salmasius wish to correct it.

"covered

“ covered our just authority, the end of all our
 “ desires. We hear appeals, we appoint pro-
 “ consuls, we create emperors; perhaps too we
 “ may restrain them—to the wise, a word is suf-
 “ ficient.” These lofty expectations were, how-
 ever, soon disappointed; nor, indeed, was it pos-
 sible that the armies and the provinces should
 long obey the luxurious and unwarlike nobles of
 Rome. On the slightest touch, the unsupported
 fabric of their pride and power fell to the ground.
 The expiring senate displayed a sudden lustre,
 blazed for a moment, and was extinguished for
 ever.

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All that had yet passed at Rome was no more
 than a theatrical representation, unless it was ra-
 tified by the more substantial power of the le-
 gions. Leaving the senators to enjoy their dream
 of freedom and ambition, Tacitus proceeded to
 the Thracian camp, and was there, by the Præ-
 torian præfect, presented to the assembled troops,
 as the prince whom they themselves had de-
 manded, and whom the senate had bestowed.
 As soon as the præfect was silent, the emperor
 addressed himself to the soldiers with eloquence
 and propriety. He gratified their avarice by a
 liberal distribution of treasure, under the names
 of pay and donative. He engaged their esteem
 by a spirited declaration, that although his age
 might disable him from the performance of mili-
 tary exploits, his counsels should never be un-

A. D. 276.
Tacitus is
acknow-
ledged by
the army.

¹⁵ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 230. 232, 233. The senators ce-
 lebrated the happy restoration with hecatombs and public rejoicings.

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XII.

The Alani
invade
Asia, and
are repul-
sed by Ta-
citus.

worthy of a Roman general, the successor of the brave Aurelian¹⁶.

Whilst the deceased emperor was making preparations for a second expedition into the East, he had negotiated with the Alani, a Scythian people, who pitched their tents in the neighbourhood of the lake Mæotis. Those barbarians, allured by presents and subsidies, had promised to invade Persia with a numerous body of light cavalry. They were faithful to their engagements; but when they arrived on the Roman frontier, Aurelian was already dead, the design of the Persian war was at least suspended, and the generals, who, during their interregnum, exercised a doubtful authority, were unprepared either to receive or to oppose them. Provoked by such treatment, which they considered as trifling and perfidious, the Alani had recourse to their own valour for their payment and revenge; and as they moved with the usual swiftness of Tartars, they had soon spread themselves over the provinces of Pontus, Cappadocia, Cilicia, and Galatia. The legions, who from the opposite shores of the Bosphorus could almost distinguish the flames of the cities and villages, impatiently urged their general to lead them against the invaders. The conduct of Tacitus was suitable to his age and station. He convinced the barbarians, of the faith, as well as of the power, of the empire. Great numbers of the Alani, appeased by the punctual discharge of the engage-

¹⁶ Hist. August. p. 228.

ments which Aurelian had contracted with them, relinquished their booty and captives, and quietly retreated to their own deserts, beyond the Phasis. Against the remainder who refused peace, the Roman emperor waged, in person, a successful war. Seconded by an army of brave and experienced veterans, in a few weeks he delivered the provinces of Asia from the terror of the Scythian invasion¹⁷.

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But the glory and life of Tacitus were of short duration. Transported, in the depth of winter, from the soft retirement of Campania to the foot of mount Caucasus, he sunk under the unaccustomed hardships of a military life. The fatigues of the body were aggravated by the cares of the mind. For a while, the angry and selfish passions of the soldiers had been suspended by the enthusiasm of public virtue. They soon broke out with redoubled violence, and raged in the camp, and even in the tent, of the aged emperor. His mild and amiable character served only to inspire contempt, and he was incessantly tormented with factions which he could not assuage, and by demands which it was impossible to satisfy. Whatever flattering expectations he had conceived of reconciling the public disorders, Tacitus soon was convinced, that the licentiousness of the army

Death of
the emperor
Tacitus.

¹⁷ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 230. Zosimus, l. i. p. 57. Zonaras, l. xii. p. 637. Two passages in the life of Probus (p. 236. 238.) convince me, that these Scythian invaders of Pontus were Alarii. If we may believe Zosimus (l. i. p. 58.), Florianus pursued them as far as the Cimmerician Bosporus. But he had scarcely time for so long and difficult an expedition.

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A. D. 276.
April 12.

Usurpation
and death
of his brother
Florianus.

disdained the feeble restraint of laws, and his last hour was hastened by anguish and disappointment. It may be doubtful whether the soldiers imbrued their hands in the blood of this innocent prince¹⁸. It is certain, that their insolence was the cause of his death. He expired at Tyana in Cappadocia, after a reign of only six months and about twenty days¹⁹.

The eyes of Tacitus were scarcely closed, before his brother Florianus shewed himself unworthy to reign, by the hasty usurpation of the purple, without expecting the approbation of the senate. The reverence for the Roman constitution, which yet influenced the camp and the provinces, was sufficiently strong to dispose them to censure, but not to provoke them to oppose, the precipitate ambition of Florianus. The discontent would have evaporated in idle murmurs, had not the general of the East, the heroic Probus, boldly declared himself the avenger of the senate. The contest, however, was still unequal; nor could the most able leader, at the head of the effeminate troops of Egypt and Syria, encounter, with any hopes of victory, the legions of Europe, whose irresistible strength appeared to support the brother of Tacitus. But the fortune

¹⁸ Eutropius and Aurelius Victor only say that he died; Victor Junior adds, that it was of a fever. Zosimus and Zonaras affirm, that he was killed by the soldiers. Vopiscus mentions both accounts, and seems to hesitate. Yet surely these jarring opinions are easily reconciled.

¹⁹ According to the two Victors, he reigned exactly two hundred days.

and

and activity of Probus triumphed over every obstacle. The hardy veterans of his rival, accustomed to cold climates, sickened and consumed away in the sultry heats of Cilicia, where the summer proved remarkably unwholesome. Their numbers were diminished by frequent desertion, the passes of the mountains were feebly defended; Tarsus opened its gates; and the soldiers of Florianus, when they had permitted him to enjoy the Imperial title about three months, delivered the empire from civil war by the easy sacrifice of a prince whom they despised ²⁰.

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The perpetual revolutions of the throne had so perfectly erased every notion of hereditary right, that the family of an unfortunate emperor was incapable of exciting the jealousy of his successors. The children of Tacitus and Florianus were permitted to descend into a private station, and to mingle with the general mass of the people. Their poverty indeed became an additional safeguard to their innocence. When Tacitus was elected by the senate, he resigned his ample patrimony to the public service ²¹, an act of generosity specious in appearance, but which evidently disclosed his intention of transmitting the empire to his descendants. The only consolation of their fallen state, was the remembrance of transient

Their family subsists in obscurity.

²⁰ Hist. August. p. 231. Zosimus, l. i. p. 58, 59. Zonaras, l. xii. p. 637. Aurelius Victor says, that Probus assumed the empire in Illyricum; an opinion which (though adopted by a very learned man) would throw that period of history into inextricable confusion.

²¹ Hist. August. p. 229.

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Character
and eleva-
tion of the
emperor
Probus.

greatness, and a distant hope, the child of a flattering prophecy, that, at the end of a thousand years, a monarch of the race of Tacitus should arise, the protector of the senate, the restorer of Rome, and the conqueror of the whole earth ²².

The peasants of Illyricum, who had already given Claudius and Aurelian to the sinking empire, had an equal right to glory in the elevation of Probus ²³. Above twenty years before, the emperor Valerian, with his usual penetration, had discovered the rising merit of the young soldier, on whom he conferred the rank of tribune, long before the age prescribed by the military regulations. The tribune soon justified his choice, by a victory over a great body of Sarmatians, in which he saved the life of a near relation of Valerian; and deserved to receive from the emperor's hand the collars, bracelets, spears, and banners, the mural and the civic crown, and all the honourable rewards reserved by ancient Rome for successful valour. The third, and afterwards the tenth, legion were intrusted to the command of Probus, who, in every step of his promotion, shewed himself superior to the station which he filled. Africa and Pontus, the Rhine, the Danube, the Euphrates, and the Nile, by turns

²² He was to send judges to the Parthians, Persians, and Sarmatians, a president to Taprobana, and a praefect to the Roman island (supposed by Casaubon and Salmasius to mean Britain). Such a history as mine (says Vopiscus with proper modesty) will not subsist a thousand years to expose or justify the prediction.

²³ For the private life of Probus, see Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 234—237.

afforded

afforded him the most splendid occasions of displaying his personal prowess and his conduct in war. Aurelian was indebted to him for the conquest of Egypt, and still more indebted for the honest courage with which he often checked the cruelty of his master. Tacitus, who desired by the abilities of his generals to supply his own deficiency of military talents, named him commander in chief of all the eastern provinces, with five times the usual salary, the promise of the consulship, and the hope of a triumph. When Probus ascended the Imperial throne, he was about forty-four years of age²⁴; in the full possession of his fame, of the love of the army, and of a mature vigour of mind and body.

His acknowledged merit, and the success of his arms against Florianus, left him without an enemy or a competitor. Yet, if we may credit his own professions, very far from being desirous of the empire, he had accepted it with the most sincere reluctance. "But it is no longer in my power," says Probus, in a private letter, "to lay down a title so full of envy and of danger. I must continue to personate the character which the soldiers have imposed upon me"²⁵. His dutiful address to the senate displayed the sentiments, or at least the language, of a Roman patriot: "When you elected one of your order,

His respectful conduct towards the senate.

²⁴ According to the Alexandrian Chronicle, he was fifty at the time of his death.

²⁵ The letter was addressed to the Prætorian præfect, whom (on condition of his good behaviour) he promised to continue in his great office. See Hist. August. p. 237.

" conscript

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“ conscript fathers! to succeed the emperor Au-
 “ relian, you acted in a manner suitable to your
 “ justice and wisdom. For you are the legal so-
 “ vereigns of the world, and the power which
 “ you derive from your ancestors, will descend
 “ to your posterity. Happy would it have been,
 “ if Florianus, instead of usurping the purple of
 “ his brother, like a private inheritance, had ex-
 “ pected what your majesty might determine,
 “ either in his favour, or in that of any other
 “ person. The prudent soldiers have punished
 “ his rashness. To me they have offered the
 “ title of Augustus. But I submit to your cle-
 “ mency my pretensions and my merits²⁶.”

A. D. 276.
August 3.

When this respectful epistle was read by the con-
 sul, the senators were unable to disguise their sa-
 tisfaction, that Probus should condescend thus
 humbly to solicit a sceptre which he already pos-
 sessed. They celebrated with the warmest gra-
 titude his virtues, his exploits, and above all his
 moderation. A decree immediately passed, with-
 out a dissenting voice, to ratify the election of
 the eastern armies, and to confer on their chief
 all the several branches of the Imperial dignity:
 the names of Cæsar and Augustus, the title of
 Father of his country, the right of making in the
 same day three motions in the senate²⁷, the office

²⁶ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 237. The date of the letter is
 assuredly faulty. Instead of *Non. Februar.* we may read *Non. August.*

²⁷ Hist. August. p. 238. It is odd, that the senate should treat
 Probus less favourably than Marcus Antoninus. That prince had
 received, even before the death of Pius, *Jus quintæ relationis*. See Ca-
 pitolin. in Hist. August. p. 24.

of Pontifex Maximus, the tribunitian power, and the proconsular command; a mode of investiture, which, though it seemed to multiply the authority of the emperor, expressed the constitution of the ancient republic. The reign of Probus corresponded with this fair beginning. The senate was permitted to direct the civil administration of the empire. Their faithful general asserted the honour of the Roman arms, and often laid at their feet crowns of gold and barbaric trophies, the fruits of his numerous victories²⁸. Yet, whilst he gratified their vanity, he must secretly have despised their indolence and weakness. Though it was every moment in their power to repeal the disgraceful edict of Gallienus, the proud successors of the Scipios patiently acquiesced in their exclusions from all military employments. They soon experienced, that those who refuse the sword, must renounce the sceptre.

Victories
of Probus
over the
barbarians.

The strength of Aurelian had crushed on every side the enemies of Rome. After his death they seemed to revive with an increase of fury and of numbers. They were again vanquished by the active vigour of Probus, who, in a short reign of about six years²⁹, equalled the fame of ancient heroes, and restored peace and order to every province of the Roman world. The dangerous

²⁸ See the dutiful letter of Probus to the senate, after his German victories. Hist. August. p. 239.

²⁹ The date and duration of the reign of Probus are very correctly ascertained by Cardinal Norris, in his learned work, *De Epochis Syro-Macedonum*, p. 96—105. A passage of Eusebius connects the second year of Probus, with the æras of several of the Syrian cities.

frontier

frontier of Rhætia he so firmly secured, that he left it without the suspicion of an enemy. He broke the wandering power of the Sarmatian tribes, and by the terror of his arms compelled those barbarians to relinquish their spoil. The Gothic nation courted the alliance of so warlike an emperor³⁰. He attacked the Isaurians in their mountains, besieged and took several of their strongest castles³¹, and flattered himself that he had for ever suppressed a domestic foe, whose independence so deeply wounded the majesty of the empire. The troubles excited by the usurper Firmus in the Upper Egypt, had never been perfectly appeased, and the cities of Ptolemais and Coptos, fortified by the alliance of the Blemmyes, still maintained an obscure rebellion. The chastisement of those cities, and of their auxiliaries the savages of the South, is said to have alarmed the court of Persia³², and the Great King sued in vain for the friendship of Probus. Most of the exploits which distinguished his reign, were achieved by the personal valour and conduct of the emperor, insomuch that the writer of his life expresses some amazement how, in so short a time, a single man could be present in so many distant wars. The remaining actions he intrusted to the care of his lieutenants, the judicious choice of

³⁰ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 239.

³¹ Zosimus (l. i. p. 62—65.) tells a very long and trifling story of Lycius the Isaurian robber.

³² Zosim. l. i. p. 65. Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 239, 240. But it seems incredible, that the defeat of the savages of Æthiopia could affect the Persian monarch.

whom

whom forms no inconsiderable part of his glory. C H A P.
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 Carus, Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius, Galerius, Asclepiodatus, Annibalianus, and a crowd of other chiefs, who afterwards ascended or supported the throne, were trained to arms in the severe school of Aurelian and Probus³³.

But the most important service which Probus rendered to the republic, was the deliverance of Gaul, and the recovery of seventy flourishing cities oppressed by the barbarians of Germany, who, since the death of Aurelian, had ravaged that great province with impunity³⁴. Among the various multitude of those fierce invaders, we may distinguish, with some degree of clearness, three great armies, or rather nations, successively vanquished by the valour of Probus. He drove back the Franks into their morasses; a descriptive circumstance from whence we may infer, that the confederacy known by the manly appellation of *Free*, already occupied the flat maritime country, intersected and almost overflowed by the stagnating waters of the Rhine, and that several tribes of the Frisians and Batavians had acceded to their alliance. He vanquished the Burgundians, a considerable people of the Vandalic race. They had wandered in quest of booty from the banks of the Oder to those of the Seine. They esteemed themselves sufficiently fortunate to purchase, by the restitution of all their booty, the permis-

A. D. 277.
 He delivers
 Gaul from
 the invasion
 of the
 Germans,

³³ Besides these well-known chiefs, several others are named by Vopiscus (Hist. August. p. 241.), whose actions have not reached our knowledge.

³⁴ See the Cæsars of Julian, and Hist. August. p. 238. 240, 241.

lion

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sion of an undisturbed retreat. They attempted to elude that article of the treaty. Their punishment was immediate and terrible³⁵. But of all the invaders of Gaul, the most formidable were the Lygians, a distant people who reigned over a wide domain on the frontiers of Poland and Silesia³⁶. In the Lygian nation, the Aarii held the first rank by their numbers and fierceness. "The Aarii (it is thus that they are described by the energy of Tacitus) study to improve by art and circumstances the innate terrors of their barbarism. Their shields are black, their bodies are painted black. They chuse for the combat the darkest hour of the night. Their host advances, covered as it were with a funeral shade³⁷; nor do they often find an enemy capable of sustaining so strange and infernal an aspect. Of all our senses, the eyes are the first vanquished in battle³⁸." Yet the arms and discipline of the Romans easily discomfited these horrid phantoms. The Lygii were defeated in a general engagement, and Semno, the most renowned of their chiefs, fell alive into the hands of Probus. That prudent emperor, unwilling to reduce a brave people to despair, granted them an honourable capitulation, and permitted them

³⁵ Zosimus, l. i. p. 62. Hist. August. p. 240. But the latter supposes the punishment inflicted with the consent of their kings; if so, it was partial, like the offence.

³⁶ See Cluver. *Germania Antiqua*, l. iii. Ptolemy places in their country the city of Calisia, probably Calish in Silesia.

³⁷ *Feralis umbra*, is the expression of Tacitus: it is surely a very bold one.

³⁸ Tacit. *Germania* (c. 43.).

to return in safety to their native country. But the losses which they suffered in the march, the battle, and the retreat, broke the power of the nation: nor is the Lygian name ever repeated in the history either of Germany or of the empire. The deliverance of Gaul is reported to have cost the lives of four hundred thousand of the invaders; a work of labour to the Romans, and of expence to the emperor, who gave a piece of gold for the head of every barbarian³⁹. But as the fame of warriors is built on the destruction of human kind, we may naturally suspect, that the sanguinary account was multiplied by the avarice of the soldiers, and accepted without any very severe examination by the liberal vanity of Probus.

Since the expedition of Maximin, the Roman generals had confined their ambition to a defensive war against the nations of Germany, who perpetually pressed on the frontiers of the empire. The more daring Probus pursued his Gallic victories, passed the Rhine, and displayed his invincible eagles on the banks of the Elbe and the Neckar. He was fully convinced, that nothing could reconcile the minds of the barbarians to peace, unless they experienced in their own country the calamities of war. Germany, exhausted by the ill success of the last emigration, was astonished by his presence. Nine of the most considerable princes repaired to his camp, and fell prostrate at his feet. Such a

and carries
his arms
into Ger-
many.

³⁹ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 238.

treaty

C H A P.
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treaty was humbly received by the Germans, as it pleased the conqueror to dictate. He exacted a strict restitution of the effects and captives which they had carried away from the provinces; and obliged their own magistrates to punish the more obstinate robbers who presumed to detain any part of the spoil. A considerable tribute of corn, cattle, and horses, the only wealth of barbarians, was reserved for the use of the garrisons which Probus established on the limits of their territory. He even entertained some thoughts of compelling the Germans to relinquish the exercise of arms, and to trust their differences to the justice, their safety to the power, of Rome. To accomplish these salutary ends, the constant residence of an Imperial governor, supported by a numerous army, was indispensably requisite. Probus therefore judged it more expedient to defer the execution of so great a design; which was indeed rather of specious than solid utility⁴⁰. Had Germany been reduced into the state of a province, the Romans, with immense labour and expence, would have acquired only a more extensive boundary to defend against the fiercer and more active barbarians of Scythia.

He builds
a wall
from the
Rhine to
the Da-
nube.

Instead of reducing the warlike natives of Germany to the condition of subjects, Probus contented himself with the humble expedient of raising a bulwark against their inroads. The country, which now forms the circle of Swabia,

⁴⁰ Hist. August. p. 238, 239. Vopiscus quotes a letter from the emperor to the senate, in which he mentions his design of reducing Germany into a province.

had been left desert in the age of Augustus by the emigration of its ancient inhabitants⁴¹. The fertility of the soil soon attracted a new colony from the adjacent provinces of Gaul. Crowds of adventurers, of a roving temper and of desperate fortunes, occupied the doubtful possession, and acknowledged, by the payment of tythes, the majesty of the empire⁴². To protect these new subjects, a line of frontier garrisons was gradually extended from the Rhine to the Danube. About the reign of Hadrian, when that mode of defence began to be practised, these garrisons were connected and covered by a strong intrenchment of trees and palisades. In the place of so rude a bulwark, the emperor Probus constructed a stone-wall of a considerable height, and strengthened it by towers at convenient distances. From the neighbourhood of Newstadt and Ratibon on the Danube, it stretched across hills, vallies, rivers, and morasses, as far as Wimpfen on the Neckar, and at length terminated on the banks of the Rhine, after a winding course of near two hundred miles⁴³. This important barrier, uniting the two mighty streams that protected the provinces of Europe, seemed to fill up the vacant space through which

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⁴¹ Strabo, l. vii. According to Velleius Paterculus (ii. 108.), Maroboduus led his Macromanni into Bohemia: Cluverius (German. Antiq. iii. 8.) proves that it was from Swabia.

⁴² These settlers, from the payment of tythes, were denominated *Decurati*. Tacit. Germania, c. 29.

⁴³ See Notes de l'Abbé de la Bletterie à la Germanie de Tacite, p. 183. His account of the wall is chiefly borrowed (as he says himself) from the *Alsatia Illustrata* of Schœpflin.

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XII.

the barbarians, and particularly the Alemanni, could penetrate with the greatest facility into the heart of the empire. But the experience of the world, from China to Britain, has exposed the vain attempt of fortifying an extensive tract of country⁴⁴. An active enemy, who can select and vary his points of attack, must, in the end, discover some feeble spot, or some unguarded moment. The strength as well as the attention of the defenders is divided; and such are the blind effects of terror on the firmest troops, that a line broken in a single place is almost instantly deserted. The fate of the wall which Probus erected, may confirm the general observation. Within a few years after his death, it was overthrown by the Alemanni. Its scattered ruins, universally ascribed to the power of the Dæmon, now serve only to excite the wonder of the Swabian peasant.

Introduc-
tion and
settlement
of the bar-
barians.

Among the useful conditions of peace imposed by Probus on the vanquished nations of Germany, was the obligation of supplying the Roman army with sixteen thousand recruits, the bravest and most robust of their youth. The emperor dispersed them through all the provinces, and distributed this dangerous reinforcement in small bands of fifty or sixty each, among the

⁴⁴ See *Recherches sur les Chinois et les Egyptiens*, tom. ii. p. 81—102. The anonymous author is well acquainted with the globe in general, and with Germany in particular: with regard to the latter, he quotes a work of M. Hanfelman; but he seems to confound the wall of Probus, designed against the Alemanni, with the fortification of the Mattiaci, constructed in the neighbourhood of Frankfort against the Catti.

national

national troops; judiciously observing, that the aid which the republic derived from the barbarians, should be felt but not seen⁴⁵. Their aid was now become necessary. The feeble elegance of Italy and the internal provinces could no longer support the weight of arms. The hardy frontier of the Rhine and Danube still produced minds and bodies equal to the labours of the camp; but a perpetual series of wars had gradually diminished their numbers. The infrequency of marriage, and the ruin of agriculture, affected the principles of population, and not only destroyed the strength of the present, but intercepted the hope of future generations. The wisdom of Probus embraced a great and beneficial plan of replenishing the exhausted frontiers, by new colonies of captive or fugitive barbarians, on whom he bestowed lands, cattle, instruments of husbandry, and every encouragement that might engage them to educate a race of soldiers for the service of the republic. Into Britain, and most probably into Cambridgeshire⁴⁶, he transported a considerable body of Vandals. The impossibility of an escape reconciled them to their situation, and in the subsequent troubles of that island, they approved themselves the most faithful servants of the state⁴⁷. Great num-

⁴⁵ He distributed about fifty or sixty barbarians to a *Numerus*, as it was then called, a corps with whose established number we are not exactly acquainted.

⁴⁶ Camden's *Britannia*, Introduction, p. 136.; but he speaks from a very doubtful conjecture.

⁴⁷ Zosimus, l. i. p. 68. According to Vopiscus, another body of Vandals was less faithful.

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bers of Franks and Gepidæ were settled on the banks of the Danube and the Rhine. An hundred thousand Bastarnæ, expelled from their own country, cheerfully accepted an establishment in Thrace, and soon imbibed the manners and sentiments of Roman subjects⁴⁸. But the expectations of Probus were too often disappointed. The impatience and idleness of the barbarians could ill brook the slow labours of agriculture. Their unconquerable love of freedom, rising against despotism, provoked them into hasty rebellions, alike fatal to themselves and to the provinces⁴⁹; nor could these artificial supplies, however repeated by succeeding emperors, restore the important limit of Gaul and Illyricum to its ancient and native vigour.

Daring enterprise of the Franks.

Of all the barbarians who abandoned their new settlements, and disturbed the public tranquillity, a very small number returned to their own country. For a short season they might wander in arms through the empire; but in the end they were surely destroyed by the power of a warlike emperor. The successful rashness of a party of Franks was attended, however, with such memorable consequences, that it ought not to be passed unnoticed. They had been established by Probus on the sea-coast of Pontus, with a view of strengthening the frontier against the inroads of the Alani. A fleet stationed in one of the harbours of the Euxine, fell into the

⁴⁸ Hist. August. p. 240. They were probably expelled by the Goths. Zosim. l. i. p. 66.

⁴⁹ Hist. August. p. 240.

hands

hands of the Franks; and they resolved, through unknown seas, to explore their way from the mouth of the Phasis to that of the Rhine. They easily escaped through the Bosphorus and the Hellespont, and cruising along the Mediterranean, indulged their appetite for revenge and plunder, by frequent descents on the unsuspecting shores of Asia, Greece, and Africa. The opulent city of Syracuse, in whose port the navies of Athens and Carthage had formerly been sunk, was sacked by a handful of barbarians, who massacred the greatest part of the trembling inhabitants. From the island of Sicily, the Franks proceeded to the columns of Hercules, trusted themselves to the ocean, coasted round Spain and Gaul, and steering their triumphant course through the British channel, at length finished their surprising voyage, by landing in safety on the Batavian or Frisian shores⁵⁰. The example of their success, instructing their countrymen to conceive the advantages, and to despise the dangers, of the sea, pointed out to their enterprising spirit, a new road to wealth and glory.

Notwithstanding the vigilance and activity of Probus, it was almost impossible that he could at once contain in obedience every part of his wide-extended dominions. The barbarians, who broke their chains, had seized the favourable opportunity of a domestic war. When the emperor marched to the relief of Gaul, he devolved the command

Revolt of
Saturninus
in the East,

⁵⁰ Panegy. Vet. v. 18. Zosimus, l. i. p. 66.

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of the East on Saturninus. That general, a man of merit and experience, was driven into rebellion by the absence of his sovereign, the levity of the Alexandrian people, the pressing instances of his friends, and his own fears; but from the moment of his elevation, he never entertained a hope of empire, or even of life. "Alas!" he said, "the republic has lost a useful servant, and the rashness of an hour has destroyed the services of many years. You know not," continued he, "the misery of sovereign power; a sword is perpetually suspended over our head. We dread our very guards, we distrust our companions. The choice of action or of repose is no longer in our disposition, nor is there any age, or character, or conduct, that can protect us from the censure of envy. In thus exalting me to the throne, you have doomed me to a life of cares, and to an untimely fate. The only consolation which remains is, the assurance that I shall not fall alone." But as the former part of his prediction was verified by the victory, so the latter was disappointed by the clemency, of Probus. That amiable prince attempted even to save the unhappy Saturninus from the fury of the soldiers. He had more than once solicited the usurper himself, to place some confidence in the mercy of a sovereign who so highly esteemed his cha-

A. D. 279.

§1 Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 245, 246. The unfortunate orator had studied rhetoric at Carthage, and was therefore more probably a Moor (Zosim. l. i. p. 60.) than a Gaul, as Vopiscus calls him.

rafter,

rafter, that he had punished, as a malicious informer, the first who related the improbable news of his defection⁵². Saturninus might, perhaps, have embraced the generous offer, had he not been restrained by the obstinate distrust of his adherents. Their guilt was deeper, and their hopes more sanguine, than those of their experienced leader.

The revolt of Saturninus was scarcely extinguished in the East, before new troubles were excited in the West, by the rebellion of Bonofus and Proculus in Gaul. The most distinguished merit of those two officers, was their respective prowess, of the one in the combats of Bacchus, of the other in those of Venus⁵³, yet neither of them were destitute of courage and capacity, and both sustained with honour the august character which the fear of punishment had engaged them to assume, till they sunk at length beneath the superior genius of Probus. He used the victory with his accustomed moderation, and spared the fortunes as well as the lives of their innocent families⁵⁴.

A.D. 280.
of Bonofus
and Proculus
in
Gaul.

⁵² Zonaras l. xii. p. 638.

⁵³ A very surprising instance is recorded of the prowess of Proculus. He had taken one hundred Sarmatian virgins. The rest of the story he must relate in his own language: *Ex his unâ nocte decem inivi; omnes tamen, quod in me erat, mulieres intra dies quindecim reddidi.* Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 246.

⁵⁴ Proculus, who was a native of Albengue on the Genoese coast, armed two thousand of his own slaves. His riches were great, but they were acquired by robbery. It was afterwards a saying of his family, *Nec latrones esse, nec principes tibi placere.* Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 247.

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A. D. 281.
Triumph
of the em-
peror Pro-
bus.

The arms of Probus had now suppressed all the foreign and domestic enemies of the state. His mild but steady administration confirmed the re-establishment of the public tranquillity; nor was there left in the provinces a hostile barbarian, a tyrant, or even a robber, to revive the memory of past disorders. It was time that the emperor should revisit Rome, and celebrate his own glory and the general happiness. The triumph due to the valour of Probus was conducted with a magnificence suitable to his fortune, and the people who had so lately admired the trophies of Aurelian, gazed with equal pleasure on those of his heroic successor⁵⁵. We cannot, on this occasion, forget the desperate courage of about four-score gladiators, reserved with near six hundred others, for the inhuman sports of the amphitheatre. Disdaining to shed their blood for the amusement of the populace, they killed their keepers, broke from the place of their confinement, and filled the streets of Rome with blood and confusion. After an obstinate resistance, they were overpowered and cut in pieces by the regular forces; but they obtained at least an honourable death, and the satisfaction of a just revenge⁵⁶.

His disci-
pline.

The military discipline which reigned in the camps of Probus, was less cruel than that of Aurelian, but it was equally rigid and exact. The latter had punished the irregularities of the soldiers with unrelenting severity, the former

⁵⁵ Hist. August. p. 240.

⁵⁶ Zosim. l. i. p. 66.

prevented

prevented them by employing the legions in constant and useful labours. When Probus commanded in Egypt, he executed many considerable works for the splendour and benefit of that rich country. The navigation of the Nile, so important to Rome itself, was improved; and temples, bridges, porticoes, and palaces, were constructed by the hands of the soldiers, who acted by turns as architects, as engineers, and as husbandmen⁵⁷. It was reported of Hannibal, that, in order to preserve his troops from the dangerous temptations of idleness, he had obliged them to form large plantations of olive trees along the coast of Africa⁵⁸. From a similar principle, Probus exercised his legions in covering, with rich vineyards, the hills of Gaul and Pannonia, and two considerable spots are described, which were entirely dug and planted by military labour⁵⁹. One of these, known under the name of Mount Almo, was situated near Sirmium, the country where Probus was born, for which he ever retained a partial affection, and whose gratitude he endeavoured to secure, by converting into tillage a large and unhealthy tract of marshy ground. An army thus employ-

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⁵⁷ Hist. August. p. 236.

⁵⁸ Aurel. Victor in Prob. But the policy of Hannibal, unnoticed by any more ancient writer, is irreconcilable with the history of his life. He left Africa when he was nine years old, returned to it when he was forty-five, and immediately lost his army in the decisive battle of Zama. Livius, xxx. 37.

⁵⁹ Hist. August. p. 240. Eutrop. ix. 17. Aurel. Victor in Prob. Victor Junior. He revoked the prohibition of Domitian, and granted a general permission of planting vines to the Gauls, the Britons, and the Pannonians.

ed,

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His death.

ed, constituted perhaps the most useful, as well as the bravest, portion of Roman subjects.

But in the prosecution of a favourite scheme, the best of men, satisfied with the rectitude of their intentions, are subject to forget the bounds of moderation; nor did Probus himself sufficiently consult the patience and disposition of his fierce legionaries⁶⁰. The dangers of the military profession seem only to be compensated by a life of pleasure and idleness; but if the duties of the soldier are incessantly aggravated by the labours of the peasant, he will at last sink under the intolerable burden, or shake it off with indignation. The imprudence of Probus is said to have inflamed the discontent of his troops. More attentive to the interests of mankind than to those of the army, he expressed the vain hope, that, by the establishment of universal peace, he should soon abolish the necessity of a standing and mercenary force⁶¹. The unguarded expression proved fatal to him. In one of the hottest days of summer, as he severely urged the unwholesome labour of draining the marshes of Sirmium, the soldiers, impatient of fatigue, on a sudden threw down their tools, grasped their arms, and broke out into a furious mutiny. The emperor, conscious of his danger, took refuge in a lofty tower, constructed for the purpose of surveying the

⁶⁰ Julian bestows a severe, and indeed excessive, censure on the rigour of Probus, who, as he thinks, almost deserved his fate.

⁶¹ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 241. He lavishes on this idle hope a large stock of very foolish eloquence.

progress

progress of the work ⁶². The tower was instantly forced, and a thousand swords were plunged at once into the bosom of the unfortunate Probus. The rage of the troops subsided as soon as it had been gratified. They then lamented their fatal rashness, forgot the severity of the emperor, whom they had massacred, and hastened to perpetuate, by an honourable monument, the memory of his virtues and victories ⁶³.

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XII.
A.D. 282,
August.

When the legions had indulged their grief and repentance for the death of Probus, their unanimous consent declared Carus, his Prætorian præfect, the most deserving of the Imperial throne. Every circumstance that relates to this prince appears of a mixed and doubtful nature. He gloried in the title of Roman Citizen; and affected to compare the purity of *his* blood, with the foreign and even barbarous origin of the preceding emperors; yet the most inquisitive of his contemporaries, very far from admitting his claim, have variously deduced his own birth, or that of his parents, from Illyricum, from Gaul, or from Africa ⁶⁴. Though a soldier, he had received a learned education; though a senator, he was invested with the first dignity of

Election
and character of
Carus.

⁶² *Turris ferrata*. It seems to have been a moveable tower, and cased with iron.

⁶³ Probus, et vere probus situs est: Victor omnium gentium Barbararum: victor etiam tyrannorum.

⁶⁴ Yet all this may be conciliated. He was born at Narbonne in Illyricum, confounded by Eutropius with the more famous city of that name in Gaul. His father might be an African, and his mother a noble Roman. Carus himself was educated in the capital. See Scaliger, *Animadversion. ad Euseb. Chron.* p. 241.

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the army; and in an age, when the civil and military professions began to be irrecoverably separated from each other, they were united in the person of Carus. Notwithstanding the severe justice which he exercised against the assassins of Probus, to whose favour and esteem he was highly indebted, he could not escape the suspicion of being accessory to a deed from whence he derived the principal advantage. He enjoyed, at least before his elevation, an acknowledged character of virtue and abilities⁶⁵; but his austere temper insensibly degenerated into moroseness and cruelty; and the imperfect writers of his life almost hesitate whether they shall not rank him in the number of Roman tyrants⁶⁶. When Carus assumed the purple, he was about sixty years of age, and his two sons Carinus, and Numerian, had already attained the season of manhood⁶⁷.

The sentiments of the senate and people.

The authority of the senate expired with Probus; nor was the repentance of the soldiers displayed by the same dutiful regard for the civil power, which they had testified after the unfortunate death of Aurelian. The election of Carus was decided without expecting the approbation of the senate, and the new emperor contented

⁶⁵ Probus had requested of the senate an equestrian statue and a marble palace, at the public expence, as a just recompence of the singular merit of Carus. Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 249.

⁶⁶ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 242. 249. Julian excludes the emperor Carus and both his sons from the banquet of the Cæsars.

⁶⁷ John Malela, tom. i. p. 401. But the authority of that ignorant Greek is very slight. He ridiculously derives from Carus, the city of Carrhæ, and the province of Caria, the latter of which is mentioned by Homer.

himself with announcing, in a cold and stately epistle, that he had ascended the vacant throne⁶⁸.

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A behaviour so very opposite to that of his amiable predecessor, afforded no favourable presage of the new reign; and the Romans, deprived of power and freedom, asserted their privilege of licentious murmurs⁶⁹. The voice of congratulation and flattery was not however silent; and we may still peruse, with pleasure and contempt, an eclogue, which was composed on the accession of the emperor Carus. Two shepherds, avoiding the noon-tide heat, retire into the cave of Faunus. On a spreading beech they discover some recent characters. The rural deity had described, in prophetic verses, the felicity promised to the empire, under the reign of so great a prince. Faunus hails the approach of that hero, who, receiving on his shoulders the sinking weight of the Roman world, shall extinguish war and faction, and once again restore the innocence and security of the golden age⁷⁰.

It is more than probable, that these elegant trifles never reached the ears of a veteran general, who, with the consent of the legions, was preparing to execute the long suspended design of the Persian war. Before his departure for this distant expedition, Carus conferred on his two sons, Carinus and Numerian, the title of Cæsar,

Carus defeats the
Sarmatians, and
marches into the
East.

⁶⁸ Hist. August. p. 249. Carus congratulated the senate, that one of their own order was made emperor.

⁶⁹ Hist. August. p. 242.

⁷⁰ See the first eclogue of Calphurnius. The design of it is preferred by Fontenelle, to that of Virgil's *Pollio*. See tom. iii. p. 148.

and

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and investing the former with almost an equal share of the Imperial power, directed the young prince, first to suppress some troubles which had arisen in Gaul, and afterwards to fix the seat of his residence at Rome, and to assume the government of the Western provinces". The safety of Illyricum was confirmed by a memorable defeat of the Sarmatians; sixteen thousand of those barbarians remained on the field of battle, and the number of captives amounted to twenty thousand. The old emperor, animated with the fame and prospect of victory, pursued his march, in the midst of winter, through the countries of Thrace and Asia Minor, and at length, with his younger son Numerian, arrived on the confines of the Persian monarchy. There, encamping on the summit of a lofty mountain, he pointed out to his troops the opulence and luxury of the enemy whom they were about to invade.

A.D. 283.
He gives
audience to
the Persian
ambassa-
dors.

The successor of Artaxerxes, Varanes or Bahram, though he had subdued the Segestans, one of the most warlike nations of Upper Asia⁷¹, was alarmed at the approach of the Romans, and endeavoured to retard their progress by a negotiation of peace. His ambassadors entered the camp about sun-set, at the time when the troops were satisfying their hunger with a frugal repast. The Persians expressed their desire of being introduced

⁷¹ Hist. August. p. 353. Eutropius, ix. 18. Pagi Annal.

⁷² Agathias, l. iv. p. 135. We find one of his sayings in the Bibliothèque Orientale of M. d'Herbelot. "The definition of humanity includes all other virtues."

to the presence of the Roman emperor. They were at length conducted to a soldier, who was seated on the grass. A piece of stale bacon and a few hard pease composed his supper. A coarse woollen garment of purple was the only circumstance that announced his dignity. The conference was conducted with the same disregard of courtly elegance. Carus, taking off a cap which he wore to conceal his baldness, assured the ambassadors, that, unless their master acknowledged the superiority of Rome, he would speedily render Persia as naked of trees, as his own head was destitute of hair⁷³. Notwithstanding some traces of art and preparation, we may discover in this scene the manners of Carus, and the severe simplicity which the martial princes, who succeeded Gallienus, had already restored in the Roman camps. The ministers of the Great King trembled and retired.

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The threats of Carus were not without effect. He ravaged Mesopotamia, cut in pieces whatever opposed his passage, made himself master of the great cities of Seleucia and Ctesiphon (which seemed to have surrendered without resistance), and carried his victorious arms beyond the Tygris⁷⁴. He had seized the favourable moment for an invasion. The Persian councils were distracted by

His victories and extraordinary death.

⁷³ Synesius tells this story of Carinus; and it is much more natural to understand it of Carus, than (as Petavius and Tillemont chuse to do) of Probus.

⁷⁴ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 250. Eutropius, ix. 18. The two Victors.

domestic

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A. D. 183.
Dec. 25.

domestic factions, and the greater part of their forces were detained on the frontiers of India. Rome and the East received with transport the news of such important advantages. Flattery and hope painted, in the most lively colours, the fall of Persia, the conquest of Arabia, the submission of Egypt, and a lasting deliverance from the inroads of the Scythian nations". But the reign of Carus was destined to expose the vanity of predictions. They were scarcely uttered before they were contradicted by his death; an event attended with such ambiguous circumstances, that it may be related in a letter from his own secretary to the præfect of the city. "Carus," says he, "our dearest emperor, was confined by sickness to his bed, when a furious tempest arose in the camp. The darkness which overspread the sky was so thick, that we could no longer distinguish each other; and the incessant flashes of lightning took from us the knowledge of all that passed in the general confusion. Immediately after the most violent clap of thunder, we heard a sudden cry, that the emperor was dead; and it soon appeared, that his chamberlains, in a rage of grief, had set fire to the royal pavillion, a circumstance which gave rise to the report that Carus was killed by lightning. But, as far as

75 To the Persian victory of Carus, I refer the dialogue of the *Philopatris*, which has so long been an object of dispute among the learned. But to explain and justify my opinion, would require a dissertation.

" we

" we have been able to investigate the truth, his
 " death was the natural effect of his disorder ⁷⁶ " "

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The vacancy of the throne was not productive of any disturbance. The ambition of the aspiring generals was checked by their mutual fears, and young Numerian, with his absent brother Carinus, were unanimously acknowledged as Roman emperors. The public expected that the successor of Carus would pursue his father's footsteps, and without allowing the Persians to recover from their consternation, would advance sword in hand to the palaces of Susa and Ecbatana ⁷⁷. But the legions, however strong in numbers and discipline, were dismayed by the most abject superstition. Notwithstanding all the arts that were practised to disguise the manner of the late emperor's death, it was found impossible to remove the opinion of the multitude, and the power of opinion is irresistible. Places of persons struck with lightning were considered by the ancients with pious horror, as singularly devoted to the wrath of Heaven ⁷⁸. An oracle was remembered, which marked the river Tigris as the fatal boundary of the Roman arms. The troops, terrified with the fate of Carus and with their own danger, called aloud on young Numerian to obey the will of the gods, and to lead them away from

He is succeeded by his two sons, Carinus and Numerian.

⁷⁶ Hist. August. p. 250. Yet Eutropius, Festus, Rufus, the two Victors, Jerome, Sidonius Apollinaris, Syncellus, and Zonaras, all ascribe the death of Carus to lightning.

⁷⁷ See Nemesian. Cynegeticon, v. 71, &c.

⁷⁸ See Festus and his commentators, on the word *Scribonianum*. Places struck with lightning, were surrounded with a wall: things were buried with mysterious ceremony.

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this inauspicious scene of war. The feeble emperor was unable to subdue their obstinate prejudice, and the Persians wondered at the unexpected retreat of a victorious enemy⁷⁹.

A. D. 384.
Vices of
Carinus.

The intelligence of the mysterious fate of the late emperor, was soon carried from the frontiers of Persia to Rome; and the senate, as well as the provinces, congratulated the accession of the sons of Carus. These fortunate youths were strangers, however, to that conscious superiority, either of birth or of merit, which can alone render the possession of a throne easy, and as it were natural. Born and educated in a private station, the election of their father raised them at once to the rank of princes; and his death, which happened about sixteen months afterwards, left them the unexpected legacy of a vast empire. To sustain with temper this rapid elevation, an uncommon share of virtue and prudence was requisite; and Carinus, the elder of the brothers, was more than commonly deficient in those qualities. In the Gallic war, he discovered some degree of personal courage⁸⁰; but from the moment of his arrival at Rome, he abandoned himself to the luxury of the capital, and to the abuse of his fortune. He was soft, yet cruel; devoted to pleasure, but destitute of taste; and though exquisitely susceptible of vanity, indifferent to the public esteem. In the course of a few months,

⁷⁹ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 250. Aurelius Victor seems to believe the prediction, and to approve the retreat.

⁸⁰ Nemesian. Cynegeticon, v. 69. He was a contemporary, but a poet.

he successively married and divorced nine wives, most of whom he left pregnant; and notwithstanding this legal inconstancy, found time to indulge such a variety of irregular appetites, as brought dishonour on himself and on the noblest houses of Rome. He beheld with inveterate hatred all those who might remember his former obscurity, or censure his present conduct. He banished, or put to death, the friends and counsellors whom his father had placed about him, to guide his inexperienced youth; and he persecuted with the meanest revenge his school-fellows and companions, who had not sufficiently respected the latent majesty of the emperor. With the senators, Carinus affected a lofty and regal demeanour, frequently declaring, that he designed to distribute their estates among the populace of Rome. From the dregs of that populace, he selected his favourites, and even his ministers. The palace, and even the Imperial table, was filled with singers, dancers, prostitutes, and all the various retinue of vice and folly. One of his door-keepers³¹ he intrusted with the government of the city. In the room of the Prætorian præfect, whom he put to death, Carinus substituted one of the ministers of his looser pleasures. Another who possessed the same, or even a more infamous, title to favour, was invested with the consulship. A confidential secretary, who had

³¹ *Cancellarius*. This word, so humble in its origin, has by a singular fortune rose into the title of the first great officer of state in the monarchies of Europe. See Casaubon and Salmassius, ad Hist. August. p. 253.

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acquired uncommon skill in the art of forgery, delivered the indolent emperor, with his own consent, from the irksome duty of signing his name.

When the emperor Carus undertook the Persian war, he was induced, by motives of affection as well as policy, to secure the fortunes of his family, by leaving in the hands of his eldest son the armies and provinces of the West. The intelligence which he soon received of the conduct of Carinus, filled him with shame and regret; nor had he concealed his resolution of satisfying the republic by a severe act of justice, and of adopting, in the place of an unworthy son, the brave and virtuous Constantius, who at that time was governor of Dalmatia. But the elevation of Constantius was for a while deferred; and as soon as the father's death had released Carinus from the controul of fear or decency, he displayed to the Romans the extravagancies of Elagabalus, aggravated by the cruelty of Domitian²².

He celebrates the Roman games.

The only merit of the administration of Carinus that history could record or poetry celebrate, was the uncommon splendour with which, in his own and his brother's name, he exhibited the Roman games of the theatre, the circus, and the amphitheatre. More than twenty years afterwards, when the courtiers of Diocletian represented to their frugal sovereign the fame and po-

²² Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 253, 254. Eutropius, ix. 29. Victor Junior. The reign of Diocletian indeed was so long and prosperous that it must have been very unfavourable to the reputation of Carinus.

pularity

popularity of his munificent predecessor, he acknowledged, that the reign of Carinus had indeed been a reign of pleasure⁸³. But this vain prodigality, which the prudence of Diocletian might justly despise, was enjoyed with surprise and transport by the Roman people. The oldest of the citizens, recollecting the spectacles of former days, the triumphal pomp of Probus or Aurelian, and the secular games of the emperor Philip, acknowledged that they were all surpassed by the superior magnificence of Carinus⁸⁴.

The spectacles of Carinus may therefore be best illustrated by the observation of some particulars, which history has condescended to relate concerning those of his predecessors. If we confine ourselves solely to the hunting of wild beasts, however we may censure the vanity of the design or the cruelty of the execution, we are obliged to confess, that neither before nor since the time of the Romans, so much art and expence have ever been lavished for the amusement of the people⁸⁵. By the order of Probus, a great quantity of large trees, torn up by the roots, were transplanted into the midst of the circus. The spacious and shady forest was immediately filled with a thousand ostriches, a thousand stags, a

Spectacles
of Rome.

⁸³ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 254. He calls him Carus, but the sense is sufficiently obvious, and the words were often confounded.

⁸⁴ See Calphurnius, Eclog. vii. 43. We may observe, that the spectacles of Probus were still recent, and that the poet is seconded by the historian.

⁸⁵ The philosopher Montaigne (Essais, l. iii. 6.) gives a very just and lively view of Roman magnificence in these spectacles.

H 3

thousand

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thousand fallow deer, and a thousand wild boars ; and all this variety of game was abandoned to the riotous impetuosity of the multitude. The tragedy of the succeeding day consisted in the massacre of an hundred lions, an equal number of lionesses, two hundred leopards, and three hundred bears²⁶. The collection prepared by the younger Gordian for his triumph, and which his successor exhibited in the secular games, was less remarkable by the number than by the singularity of the animals. Twenty zebras displayed their elegant forms and variegated beauty to the eyes of the Roman people²⁷. Ten elks, and as many camelopards, the lofliest and most harmless creatures that wander over the plains of Sarmatia and Æthiopia, were contrasted with thirty African hyænas, and ten Indian tygers, the most implacable savages of the torrid zone. The unoffending strength with which Nature has endowed the greater quadrupeds, was admired in the rhinoceros, the hippopotamus of the Nile²⁸, and a majestic troop of thirty-two elephants²⁹. While the populace gazed with stupid wonder on

²⁶ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 240.

²⁷ They are called *Onagri* ; but the number is too inconsiderable for mere wild asses. Cuper (de Elephantis Exercitat. ii. 7.) has proved from Oppian, Dion, and an anonymous Greek, that zebras had been seen at Rome. They were brought from some island of the ocean, perhaps Madagascar.

²⁸ Carinus gave an hippopotamus (see Calphurn. Eclog. vii. 66.) In the latter spectacles, I do not recollect any crocodiles, of which Augustus once exhibited thirty-six.—Dion Cassius, l. lv. p. 781.

²⁹ Capitolin. in Hist. August. p. 164, 165. We are not acquainted with the animals whom he calls *arcbelontes*, some read *argelontes*, others *agrielontes* : both corrections are very nugatory.

the

the splendid show, the naturalist might indeed observe the figure and properties of so many different species, transported from every part of the ancient world into the amphitheatre of Rome. But this accidental benefit, which science might derive from folly, is surely insufficient to justify such a wanton abuse of the public riches. There occurs, however, a single instance in the first Punic war, in which the senate wisely connected this amusement of the multitude with the interest of the state. A considerable number of elephants, taken in the defeat of the Carthaginian army, were driven through the circus by a few slaves, armed only with blunt javelins⁹⁰. The useful spectacle served to impress the Roman soldier with a just contempt for those unwieldy animals; and he no longer dreaded to encounter them in the ranks of war.

The hunting or exhibition of wild beasts, was conducted with a magnificence suitable to a people who styled themselves the masters of the world; nor was the edifice appropriated to that entertainment less expressive of Roman greatness. Posterity admires, and will long admire, the awful remains of the amphitheatre of Titus, which so well deserved the epithet of Colossal⁹¹. It was a building of an elliptic figure, five hundred and sixty-four feet in length, and four hundred and sixty-seven in breadth, founded on fourscore arches, and rising, with four successive orders of

The am-
phitheatre.

⁹⁰ Plin. Hist. Naturæ, viii. 6. from the annals of Piso.

⁹¹ See Maffei, Verona Illustrata, p. iv. l. i. c. 2.

architecture, to the height of one hundred and forty feet⁹³. The outside of the edifice was encrusted with marble, and decorated with statues. The slopes of the vast concave, which formed the inside, were filled and surrounded with sixty or eighty rows of seats of marble likewise, covered with cushions, and capable of receiving with ease above fourscore thousand spectators⁹⁴. Sixty-four *vomitaries* (for by that name the doors were very aptly distinguished) poured forth the immense multitude; and the entrances, passages, and stair-cases, were contrived with such exquisite skill, that each person, whether of the senatorial, the equestrian, or the plebeian order, arrived at his destined place without trouble or confusion⁹⁴. Nothing was omitted which, in any respect, could be subservient to the convenience and pleasure of the spectators. They were protected from the sun and rain by an ample canopy, occasionally drawn over their heads. The air was continually refreshed by the playing of fountains, and profusely impregnated by the grateful scent of aromatics. In the centre

⁹³ Maffei, l. ii. c. 2. The height was very much exaggerated by the ancients. It reached almost to the heavens, according to Calpurnius (Eclog. vii. 23.), and surpassed the ken of human sight, according to Ammianus Marcellinus (xvi. 10.). Yet how trifling to the great pyramid of Egypt, which rises 500 feet perpendicular!

⁹⁴ According to different copies of Victor, we read 77,000, or 87,000 spectators; but Maffei (l. ii. c. 12.) finds room on the open seats for no more than 34,000. The remainder were contained in the upper-covered galleries.

⁹⁴ See Maffei, l. ii. c. 5—12. He treats the very difficult subject with all possible clearness, and like an architect, as well as an antiquarian.

of the edifice, the *arena*, or stage, was strewed with the finest sand, and successively assumed the most different forms. At one moment it seemed to rise out of the earth, like the garden of the Hesperides, and was afterwards broken into the rocks and caverns of Thrace. The subterraneous pipes conveyed an inexhaustible supply of water; and what had just before appeared a level plain, might be suddenly converted into a wide lake, covered with armed vessels, and replenished with the monsters of the deep⁹⁵. In the decoration of these scenes, the Roman emperors displayed their wealth and liberality; and we read on various occasions, that the whole furniture of the amphitheatre consisted either of silver, or of gold, or of amber⁹⁶. The poet who describes the games of Carinus, in the character of a shepherd attracted to the capital by the fame of their magnificence, affirms, that the nets designed as a defence against the wild beasts, were of gold wire; that the porticoes were gilded, and that the *belt* or circle which divided the several ranks of spectators from each other, was studded with a precious Mosaic of beautiful stones⁹⁷.

In the midst of this glittering pageantry, the emperor Carinus, secure of his fortune, enjoyed

A. D. 284.

Sept. 12.

⁹⁵ Calphurn. Eclog. vii. 64. 73. These lines are curious, and the whole Eclogue has been of infinite use to Maffei. Calphurnius, as well as Martial (see his first book), was a poet; but when they described the amphitheatre, they both wrote from their own senses, and to those of the Romans.

⁹⁶ Consult Plin. Hist. Natur. xxxiii. 16. xxxvii. 11.

⁹⁷ Balteus en gemmis, en in lita porticus auro.

Certatim radiant, &c. Calphurn. vii.

the

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Return of
Numerian
with the
army from
Persia.

the acclamations of the people, the flattery of his courtiers, and the songs of the poets, who, for want of a more essential merit, were reduced to celebrate the divine graces of his person⁹⁸. In the same hour, but at the distance of nine hundred miles from Rome, his brother expired; and a sudden revolution transferred into the hands of a stranger the sceptre of the house of Carus⁹⁹.

The sons of Carus never saw each other after their father's death. The arrangements which their new situation required, were probably deferred till the return of the younger brother to Rome, where a triumph was decreed to the young emperors, for the glorious success of the Persian war¹⁰⁰. It is uncertain whether they intended to divide between them the administration, or the provinces, of the empire; but it is very unlikely that their union would have proved of any long duration. The jealousy of power must have been inflamed by the opposition of characters. In the most corrupt of times, Carinus was unworthy to live: Numerian deserved to reign in a happier period. His affable manners and gentle virtues secured him, as soon as they became known, the regard and affections of the public. He possessed

⁹⁸ Et Martis vultus et Apollinis esse putavi, says Calphurnius: but John Malela, who had perhaps seen pictures of Carinus, describes him as thick, short, and white, tom. i. p. 403.

⁹⁹ With regard to the time when these Roman games were celebrated, Scaliger, Salmasius, and Cuper, have given themselves a great deal of trouble to perplex a very clear subject.

¹⁰⁰ Nemesianus (in the Cynegeticons) seems to anticipate in his fancy that auspicious day.

the

the elegant accomplishments of a poet and orator, which dignify as well as adorn the humblest and the most exalted station. His eloquence, however it was applauded by the senate, was formed not so much on the model of Cicero, as on that of the modern declaimers; but in an age very far from being destitute of poetical merit, he contended for the prize with the most celebrated of his contemporaries, and still remained the friend of his rivals; a circumstance which evinces either the goodness of his heart, or the superiority of his genius¹⁰¹. But the talents of Numerian were rather of the contemplative, than of the active kind. When his father's elevation reluctantly forced him from the shade of retirement, neither his temper nor his pursuits had qualified him for the command of armies. His constitution was destroyed by the hardships of the Persian war; and he had contracted, from the heat of the climate¹⁰², such a weakness in his eyes, as obliged him, in the course of a long retreat, to confine himself to the solitude and darkness of a tent or litter. The administration of all affairs, civil as well as military, was devolved on Arrius Aper, the Prætorian præfect, who, to the power of his important office, added the honour of being father-in-law to Numerian. The Imperial

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¹⁰¹ He won all the crowns from Nemesianus, with whom he vied in didactic poetry. The senate erected a statue to the son of Carus, with a very ambiguous inscription, "To the most powerful of orators." See Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 251.

¹⁰² A more natural cause, at least, than that assigned by Vopiscus (Hist. August. p. 251.), incessantly weeping for his father's death.

pavilion

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Death of
Numerian.

pavilion was strictly guarded by his most trusty adherents; and during many days, Aper delivered to the army the supposed mandates of their invisible sovereign¹⁰³.

It was not till eight months after the death of Carus, that the Roman army, returning by slow marches from the banks of the Tigris, arrived on those of the Thracian Bosphorus. The legions halted at Chalcedon in Asia, while the court passed over to Heraclea, on the European side of the Propontis¹⁰⁴. But a report soon circulated through the camp, at first in secret whispers, and at length in loud clamours, of the emperor's death, and of the presumption of his ambitious minister, who still exercised the sovereign power in the name of a prince who was no more. The impatience of the soldiers could not long support a state of suspense. With rude curiosity they broke into the Imperial tent, and discovered only the corpse of Numerian¹⁰⁵. The gradual decline of his health might have induced them to believe that his death was natural; but the concealment was interpreted as an evidence of guilt, and the measures which Aper had taken to secure his election, became the immediate

¹⁰³ In the Persian war, Aper was suspected of a design to betray Carus. Hist. August. p. 250.

¹⁰⁴ We are obliged to the Alexandrian Chronicle, p. 274. for the knowledge of the time and place where Diocletian was elected emperor.

¹⁰⁵ Hist. August. p. 251. Eutrop. ix. 33. Hieronym. in Chron. According to these judicious writers, the death of Numerian was discovered by the stench of his dead body. Could no aromatics be found in the Imperial household?

occasion

occasion of his ruin. Yet, even in the transport of their rage and grief, the troops observed a regular proceeding, which proves how firmly discipline had been re-established by the martial successors of Gallienus. A general assembly of the army was appointed to be held at Chalcedon, whither Aper was transported in chains, as a prisoner and a criminal. A vacant tribunal was erected in the midst of the camp, and the generals and tribunes formed a great military council. They soon announced to the multitude, that their choice had fallen on Diocletian, commander of the domestics or body-guards, as the person the most capable of revenging and succeeding their beloved emperor. The future fortunes of the candidate depended on the chance or conduct of the present hour. Conscious that the station which he had filled, exposed him to some suspicions, Diocletian ascended the tribunal, and raising his eyes towards the Sun, made a solemn profession of his own innocence, in the presence of that all-seeing Deity¹⁰⁶. Then, assuming the tone of a sovereign and a judge, he commanded that Aper should be brought in chains to the foot of the tribunal. "This man," said he, "is the murderer of Numerian;" and, without giving him time to enter on a dangerous justification, drew his sword, and buried it in the breast of the unfortunate præfect. A charge supported by such decisive proof, was admitted without contradiction, and the legions, with re-

A. D. 284.
Sept. 17.
Election of
the emperor
Diocle-
tian.

¹⁰⁶ Aurel. Victor. Eutropius, ix. 20. Hieronym. in Chron.

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Defeat and
death of
Carinus.

peated acclamations, acknowledged the justice and authority of the emperor Diocletian¹⁰⁷.

Before we enter upon the memorable reign of that prince, it will be proper to punish and dismiss the unworthy brother of Numerian. Carinus possessed arms and treasures sufficient to support his legal title to the empire. But his personal vices overbalanced every advantage of birth and situation. The most faithful servants of the father despised the incapacity and dreaded the cruel arrogance of the son. The hearts of the people were engaged in favour of his rival, and even the senate was inclined to prefer an usurper to a tyrant. The arts of Diocletian inflamed the general discontent; and the winter was employed in secret intrigues, and open preparations for a civil war. In the spring, the forces of the East and of the West encountered each other in the plains of Margus, a small city of Mæsia, in the neighbourhood of the Danube¹⁰⁸. The troops, so lately returned from the Persian war, had acquired their glory at the expence of health and numbers, nor were they in a condition to contend with the unexhausted strength of the legions of Europe. Their ranks were broken, and, for a moment, Diocletian

A.D. 285.
May.

¹⁰⁷ Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 252. The reason why Diocletian killed *Aper* (a wild boar), was founded on a prophecy and a pun, as foolish as they are well known.

¹⁰⁸ Eutropius marks its situation very accurately; it was between the Mons Aureus and Viminacum. M. d'Anville (Geographie Ancienne, tom. i. p. 304.) places Margus at Kaskolatz in Servia, a little below Belgrade and Semendria.

despaired

despaired of the purple and of life. But the advantage which Carinus had obtained by the valour of his soldiers, he quickly lost by the infidelity of his officers. A tribune, whose wife he had seduced, seized the opportunity of revenge, and by a single blow extinguished civil discord in the blood of the adulterer ¹⁰⁹.

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¹⁰⁹ Hist. August. p. 254. Eutropius, p. ix. 20. Aurelius Victor. Victor in Epitome.

C H A P. XIII.

The Reign of Diocletian and his three Associates, Maximian, Galerius, and Constantius.—General Re-establishment of Order and Tranquillity.—The Persian War, Victory, and Triumph.—The new Form of Administration.—Abdication and Retirement of Diocletian and Maximian.

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XIII.

Elevation
and character of Dio-
cletian.
A.D. 285.

As the reign of Diocletian was more illustrious than that of any of his predecessors, so was his birth more abject and obscure. The strong claims of merit and of violence had frequently superseded the ideal prerogatives of nobility; but a distinct line of separation was hitherto preserved between the free and the servile part of mankind. The parents of Diocletian had been slaves in the house of Annulus, a Roman senator; nor was he himself distinguished by any other name, than that which he derived from a small town in Dalmatia, from which his mother deduced her origin¹. It is, however, probable, that his father obtained the freedom of the family, and that he soon acquired an office of scribe, which was commonly exer-

¹ Eutrop. ix. 19. Victor in Epitom. The town seems to have been properly called Doclia, from a small tribe of Illyrians (see Cellarius, Geograph. Antiqua, tom. i. p. 393.); and the original name of the fortunate slave was probably Docles; he first lengthened it to the Grecian harmony of Diocles, and at length to the Roman majesty of Diocletianus. He likewise assumed the Patrician name of Valerius, and it is usually given him by Aurelius Victor.

cised

cised by persons of his condition². Favourable oracles, or rather the consciousness of superior merit, prompted his aspiring son to pursue the profession of arms and the hopes of fortune; and it would be extremely curious to observe the gradation of arts and accidents which enabled him in the end to fulfil those oracles, and to display ~~that~~ merit to the world. Diocletian was successively promoted to the government of Mæsia, the honours of the consulship, and the important command of the guards of the palace. He distinguished his abilities in the Persian war; and, after the death of Numerian, the slave, by the confession and judgment of his rivals, was declared the most worthy of the Imperial throne. The malice of religious zeal, whilst it arraigns the savage fierceness of his colleague Maximian, has affected to cast suspicions on the personal courage of the emperor Diocletian³. It would not be easy to persuade us of the cowardice of a soldier of fortune, who acquired and preserved the esteem of the legions, as well as the favour of so many warlike princes. Yet even calumny is sagacious enough to discover and to attack the most vulnerable part. The valour of Diocletian was never found inadequate to his duty, or to the occasion; but he appears not to have

² See Dacier on the sixth satire of the second book of Horace. Cornel. Nepos, in Vit. Eumen. c. 1.

³ Lactantius (or whoever was the author of the little treatise *De Moribus Persecutorum*) accuses Diocletian of *timidity* in two places, c. 7, 8. In chap. 9. he says of him, “*erat in omni tumultu meticulosus et animi disiectus.*”

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XIII.

possessed the daring and generous spirit of a hero, who courts danger and fame, disdains artifice, and boldly challenges the allegiance of his equals. His abilities were useful rather than splendid; a vigorous mind, improved by the experience and study of mankind; dexterity and application in business; a judicious mixture of liberality and œconomy, of mildness and rigour; profound dissimulation under the disguise of military frankness; steadiness to pursue his ends; flexibility to vary his means; and, above all, the great art of submitting his own passions, as well as those of others, to the interest of his ambition, and of colouring his ambition with the most specious pretences of justice and public utility. Like Augustus, Diocletian may be considered as the founder of a new empire. Like the adopted son of Cæsar, he was distinguished as a statesman rather than as a warrior; nor did either of those princes employ force, whenever their purpose could be effected by policy.

His clemency and victory.

The victory of Diocletian was remarkable for its singular mildness. A people accustomed to applaud the clemency of the conqueror, if the usual punishments of death, exile, and confiscation, were inflicted with any degree of temper and equity, beheld, with the most pleasing astonishment, a civil war, the flames of which were extinguished in the field of battle. Diocletian received into his confidence Aristobulus, the principal minister of the house of Carus, respected the lives, the fortunes, and the dignity of his adversaries, and even continued in their respective

tive stations the greater number of the servants of Carinus⁴. It is not improbable that motives of prudence might assist the humanity of the artful Dalmatian; of these servants, many had purchased his favour by secret treachery; in others, he esteemed their grateful fidelity to an unfortunate master. The discerning judgment of Aurelian, of Probus, and of Carus, had filled the several departments of the state and army with officers of approved merit, whose removal would have injured the public service, without prompting the interest of the successor. Such a conduct, however, displayed to the Roman world the fairest prospect of the new reign, and the emperor affected to confirm this favourable prepossession, by declaring, that, among all the virtues of his predecessors, he was the most ambitious of imitating the humane philosophy of Marcus Antoninus⁵.

C. P. A. P.
XIII

Association
and character of
Maximian.
A.D. 286.
April 1.

The first considerable action of his reign seemed to evince his sincerity as well as his modesty. After the example of Martins, he gave himself a colleague in the person of Maximian, on whom he bestowed at first the title of Cæsar, and afterwards that of Augustus⁶. But the motives

⁴ In this encomium, Aurelius Victor seems to convey a just, though indirect censure of the cruelty of Constantius. It appears from the Fasti, that Aristobulus remained præfect of the city, and that he ended with Diocletian, the consulship which he had commenced with Carinus.

⁵ Aurelius Victor styles Diocletian, "Parentem potius quam Dominum." See Hist. August. p. 30.

⁶ The question of the time when Maximian received the honours of Cæsar and Augustus, has divided modern critics, and given occasion

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motives of his conduct, as well as the object of his choice, were of a very different nature from those of his admired predecessor. By investing a luxurious youth with the honours of the purple, Marcus had discharged a debt of private gratitude, at the expence, indeed, of the happiness of the state. By associating a friend and a fellow-foldier to the labours of government, Diocletian, in a time of public danger, provided for the defence both of the East and of the West. Maximian was born a peasant, and, like Aurelian, in the territory of Sirmium. Ignorant of letters⁷, careless of laws, the rusticity of his appearance and manners still betrayed in the most elevated fortune the meanness of his extraction. War was the only art which he professed. In a long course of service he had distinguished himself on every frontier of the empire; and though his military talents were formed to obey rather than to command, though, perhaps, he never attained the skill of a consummate general, he was capable, by his valour, constancy, and experience, of executing the most

to a great deal of learned wrangling. I have followed M. de Tillemont (*Histoire des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 500—505.), who has weighed the several reasons and difficulties with his scrupulous accuracy.

⁷ In an oration delivered before him (*Panegy. Vet.* ii. 8.), Maximinus expresses a doubt, whether his hero, in imitating the conduct of Hannibal and Scipio, had ever heard of their names. From thence we may fairly infer, that Maximian was more desirous of being considered as a foldier than as a man of letters; and it is in this manner that we can often translate the language of flattery into that of truth.

arduous

arduous undertakings. Nor were the vices of Maximian less useful to his benefactor. Insensible to pity, and fearless of consequences, he was the ready instrument of every act of cruelty which the policy of that artful prince might at once suggest and disclaim. As soon as a bloody sacrifice had been offered to prudence or to revenge, Diocletian, by his seasonable intercession, saved the remaining few whom he had never designed to punish, gently censured the severity of his stern colleague, and enjoyed the comparison of a golden and an iron age, which was universally applied to their opposite maxims of government. Notwithstanding the difference of their characters, the two emperors maintained, on the throne, that friendship which they had contracted in a private station. The haughty turbulent spirit of Maximian, so fatal afterwards to himself and to the public peace, was accustomed to respect the genius of Diocletian, and confessed the ascendant of reason over brutal violence*. From a motive either of pride or superstition, the two emperors assumed the titles, the one of Jovius, the other of Herculus. Whilst the motion of the world (such was the language of their venal orators) was maintained by the all-seeing wisdom of Jupiter, the in-

* *Lactantius de M. P. c. 8. Aurelius Victor.* As among the Panegyrics, we find orations pronounced in praise of Maximian, and others which flatter his adversaries at his expense, we derive some knowledge from the contrast.

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Associa-
tion of two
Cæsars,
Galerius
and Con-
stantius.
A.D. 292.
March 1.

vincible arm of Hercules purged the earth from monsters and tyrants⁹.

But even the omnipotence of Jovius and Hercules was insufficient to sustain the weight of the public administration. The prudence of Diocletian discovered, that the empire, assailed on every side by the barbarians, required on every side the presence of a great army, and of an emperor. With this view, he resolved once more to divide his unwieldy power, and with the inferior title of *Cæsars*, to confer on two generals of approved merit an equal share of the sovereign authority¹⁰. Galerius, surnamed Armentarius, from his original profession of a herdsman, and Constantius, who from his pale complexion had acquired the denomination of Chlorus¹¹, were the two persons invested with the second honours of the Imperial purple. In describing the country, extraction, and manners of Hercules, we have already delineated those of Galerius, who was often, and not improperly, styled the younger Maximian, though, in many instances both of virtue and ability, he appears to have possessed a manifest superiority over the elder. The birth of Constantius was less obscure

⁹ See the second and third panegyrics, particularly iii. 3. 10. 14. but it would be tedious to copy the diffuse and affected expressions of their false eloquence. With regard to the titles, consult Aurel. Victor, Lactantius de M. P. c. 52. Spanheim de Ufu Numismatum, &c. Dissertat. xii. 8.

¹⁰ Aurelius Victor. Victor in Epitome. Eutrop. ix. 22. Lactant. de M. P. c. 8. Hieronym. in Chron.

¹¹ It is only among the modern Greeks that Tillemont can discover his appellation of Chlorus. Any remarkable degree of paleness seems inconsistent with the *ruber* mentioned in Panegyric, v. 19.

than

than that of his colleagues. Eutropius, his father, was one of the most considerable nobles of Dardania, and his mother was the niece of the emperor Claudius¹². Although the youth of Constantius had been spent in arms, he was endowed with a mild and amiable disposition, and the popular voice had long since acknowledged him worthy of the rank which he at last attained. To strengthen the bonds of political, by those of domestic union, each of the emperors assumed the character of a father to one of the Cæsars, Diocletian to Galerius, and Maximian to Constantius; and each obliging them to repudiate their former wives, bestowed his daughter in marriage on his adopted son¹³. These four princes distributed among themselves the wide extent of the Roman empire. The defence of Gaul, Spain¹⁴, and Britain, was intrusted to Constantius: Galerius was stationed on the banks of the Danube, as the safeguard of the Illyrian provinces. Italy and Africa were considered as the department of Maximian; and for his peculiar portion, Diocletian reserved Thrace, Egypt, and the rich countries of Asia. Every one was

Departments and harmony of the four princes.

¹² Julian, the grandson of Constantius, boasts that his family was derived from the warlike Mæsiæns. Misopogon, p. 348. The Dardaniæns dwelt on the edge of Mæsiæ.

¹³ Galerius married Valeria, the daughter of Diocletian; if we speak with strictness, Theodora, the wife of Constantius, was daughter only to the wife of Maximian. Spanheim Dissertat. xi. 2.

¹⁴ This division agrees with that of the four præfectures; yet there is some reason to doubt whether Spain was not a province of Maximian. See Tillemont, tom. iv. p. 517.

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sovereign within his own jurisdiction; but their united authority extended over the whole monarchy, and each of them was prepared to assist his colleagues with his counsels or presence. The Cæsars, in their exalted rank, revered the majesty of the emperors, and the three younger princes invariably acknowledged, by their gratitude and obedience, the common parent of their fortunes. The suspicious jealousy of power found not any place among them; and the singular happiness of their union has been compared to a chorus of music, whose harmony was regulated and maintained by the skilful hand of the first artist¹⁵.

Series of
events.

This important measure was not carried into execution till about six years after the association of Maximian, and that interval of time had not been destitute of memorable incidents. But we have preferred, for the sake of perspicuity, first to describe the more perfect form of Diocletian's government, and afterwards to relate the actions of his reign, following rather the natural order of the events, than the dates of a very doubtful chronology.

A. D. 287.
State of the
peasants of
Gaul.

The first exploit of Maximian, though it is mentioned in a few words by our imperfect writers, deserves, from its singularity, to be recorded in a history of human manners. He suppressed the peasants of Gaul, who, under the

¹⁵ Julian in Cæsarib. p. 315. Spanheim's notes to the French translation, p. 122.

appel-

appellation of Bagaudæ¹⁶, had risen in a general insurrection; very similar to those, which in the fourteenth century successively afflicted both France and England¹⁷. It should seem, that very many of those institutions, referred by an easy solution to the feudal system, are derived from the Celtic barbarians. When Cæsar subdued the Gauls, that great nation was already divided into three orders of men; the clergy, the nobility, and the common people. The first governed by superstition, the second by arms, but the third and last was not of any weight or account in their public councils. It was very natural for the plebeians, oppressed by debt or apprehensive of injuries, to implore the protection of some powerful chief, who acquired over their persons and property the same absolute right as, among the Greeks and Romans, a master exercised over his slaves¹⁸. The greatest part of the nation was gradually reduced into a state of servitude; compelled to perpetual labour on the estates of the Gallic nobles, and confined to the soil, either by the real weight of fetters, or by the no less cruel and forcible restraints of the laws. During the long series of troubles which agitated Gaul, from the reign of Gal-

¹⁶ The general name of *Bagaudæ* (in the signification of Rebels) continued till the fifth century in Gaul. Some critics derive it from a Celtic word *Bagad*, a tumultuous assembly. Scaliger ad Euseb. Du Cange Glossar.

¹⁷ Chronique de Froissart, vol. i. c. 182. ii. 73—79. The *nécessité* of his story is left in our best modern writers.

¹⁸ Cæsar de Bell. Gallic. vi. 13. Orgetorix, the Helvetian, could arm for his defence a body of ten thousand slaves,

lienue

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XIII.

Their re-
bellion,

and chaf-
tisement.

lienus to that of Diocletian, the condition of these servile peasants was peculiarly miserable; and they experienced at once the complicated tyranny of their masters, of the barbarians, of the soldiers, and of the officers of the revenue¹⁹.

Their patience was at last provoked into despair. On every side they rose in multitudes, armed with rustic weapons, and with irresistible fury. The ploughman became a foot soldier, the shepherd mounted on horseback, the deserted villages and open towns were abandoned to the flames, and the ravages of the peasants equalled those of the fiercest barbarians²⁰. They asserted the natural rights of men, but they asserted those rights with the most savage cruelty. The Gallic nobles, justly dreading their revenge, either took refuge in the fortified cities, or fled from the wild scene of anarchy. The peasants reigned without controul; and two of their most daring leaders had the folly and rashness to assume the Imperial ornaments²¹. Their power soon expired at the approach of the legions. The strength of union and discipline obtained an easy victory over a licentious and divided multitude²². A severe rétaliation was inflicted on the peasants who were found in arms: the affrighted remnant returned to their respective

¹⁹ Their oppression and misery are acknowledged by Eumenius (Panegy. vi. 8.), Gallias afferatus injuriis.

²⁰ Panegy. Vet. ii. 4. Aurelius Victor.

²¹ Ælianus and Amandus. We have medals coined by them. Goltzius in Thef. R. A. p. 117. 121.

²² Levibus præliis domuit. Eutrop. ix. 20.

habita-

habitations, and their unsuccessful effort for freedom served only to confirm their slavery. So strong and uniform is the current of popular passions, that we might almost venture, from very scanty materials, to relate the particulars of this war; but we are not disposed to believe that the principal leaders, *Ælianus* and *Amandus*, were Christians²³, or to insinuate, that the rebellion, as it happened in the time of *Luther*, was occasioned by the abuse of those benevolent principles of Christianity, which inculcate the natural freedom of mankind.

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Maximian had no sooner recovered *Gaul* from the hands of the peasants, than he lost *Britain* by the usurpation of *Carausius*. Ever since the rash but successful enterprise of the *Franks* under the reign of *Probus*, their daring countrymen had constructed squadrons of light brigantines; in which they incessantly ravaged the provinces adjacent to the ocean²⁴. To repel these desultory incursions, it was found necessary to create a naval power; and the judicious measure was prosecuted with prudence and vigour. *Gessoriacum*, or *Boulogne*, in the straits of the *British* channel, was chosen by the emperor for the station of the *Roman* fleet; and the command of it was intrusted to *Carausius*, a *Menapian* of the

A.D. 287.
Revolt of
Carausius
in *Britain*.

²³ The fact rests indeed on very slight authority, a life of *St. Babolinus*, which is probably of the seventh century. See *Duchesne Scriptores Rer Francicar.* tom. i. p. 662.

²⁴ *Aurelius Victor* calls them *Germans*. *Eutropius* (ix. 21.) gives them the name of *Saxons*. But *Eutropius* lived in the ensuing century, and seems to use the language of his own times.

meanest

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meanest origin²⁵, but who had long signalized his skill as a pilot, and his valour as a soldier. The integrity of the new admiral corresponded not with his abilities. When the German pirates sailed from their own harbours, he connived at their passage, but he diligently intercepted their return, and appropriated to his own use an ample share of the spoil which they had acquired. The wealth of Carausius was, on this occasion, very justly considered as an evidence of his guilt; and Maximian had already given orders for his death. But the crafty Menapian foresaw and prevented the severity of the emperor. By his liberality he had attached to his fortunes the fleet which he commanded, and secured the barbarians in his interest. From the port of Boulogne he sailed over to Britain, persuaded the legion, and the auxiliaries which guarded that island, to embrace his party, and boldly assuming, with the Imperial purple, the title of Augustus, defied the justice and the arms of his injured sovereign²⁶.

Import-
ance of
Britain.

When Britain was thus dismembered from the empire, its importance was sensibly felt, and its loss sincerely lamented. The Romans celebrated,

²⁵ The three expressions of Eutropius, Aurelius Victor, and Eumenius, "vilissime natus," "Bataviæ alumnus," and "Menapiæ civis," give us a very doubtful account of the birth of Carausius. Dr. Stukely, however (*Hist. of Carausius*, p. 62.), chuses to make him a native of St. David's, and a prince of the blood royal of Britain. The former idea he had found in Richard of Cirencester, p. 44.

²⁶ Panegy. v. 12. Britain at this time was secure, and slightly guarded.

and

and perhaps magnified, the extent of that noble island, provided on every side with convenient harbours; the temperature of the climate, and the fertility of the soil, alike adapted for the production of corn or of vines; the valuable minerals with which it abounded; its rich pastures covered with innumerable flocks, and its woods free from wild beasts or venomous serpents. Above all, they regretted the large amount of the revenue of Britain, whilst they confessed, that such a province well deserved to become the seat of an independent monarchy²⁷. During the space of seven years, it was possessed by Carausius; and fortune continued propitious to a rebellion, supported with courage and ability. The British emperor defended the frontiers of his dominions against the Caledonians of the North, invited, from the continent, a great number of skilful artists, and displayed, on a variety of coins that are still extant, his taste and opulence. Born on the confines of the Franks, he courted the friendship of that formidable people, by the flattering imitation of their dress and manners. The bravest of their youth he enlisted among his land or sea forces; and in return for their useful alliance, he communicated to the barbarians the dangerous know-

Power of
Carausius.

²⁷ Panegy. Vct. v. 11. vii. 9. The orator Eumenius wished to exalt the glory of the hero (Constantius), with the importance of the conquest. Notwithstanding our laudable partiality for our native country, it is difficult to conceive, that, in the beginning of the fourth century, England deserved *all* these commendations. A century and a half before, it hardly paid its own establishment. See Appian in *Proem*.

ledge

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ledge of military and naval arts. Carausius still preserved the possession of Boulogne and the adjacent country. His fleets rode triumphant in the channel, commanded the mouths of the Seine and of the Rhine, ravaged the coasts of the ocean, and diffused beyond the columns of Hercules the terror of his name. Under his command, Britain, destined in a future age to obtain the empire of the sea, already assumed its natural and respectable station of a maritime power²⁸.

A. D. 289.
Acknow-
ledged by
the other
emperors.

By seizing the fleet of Boulogne, Carausius had deprived his master of the means of pursuit and revenge. And when, after a vast expence of time and labour, a new armament was launched into the water²⁹, the Imperial troops, unaccustomed to that element, were easily baffled and defeated by the veteran sailors of the usurper. This disappointed effort was soon productive of a treaty of peace. Diocletian and his colleague, who justly dreaded the enterprising spirit of Carausius, resigned to him the sovereignty of Britain, and reluctantly admitted their perfidious servant to a participation of the Imperial ho-

²⁸ As a great number of medals of Carausius are still preserved, he is become a very favourite object of antiquarian curiosity, and every circumstance of his life and actions has been investigated with sagacious accuracy. Dr. Stukely in particular has devoted a large volume to the British emperor. I have used his materials, and rejected most of his fanciful conjectures.

²⁹ When Maximian pronounced his first panegyric, the naval preparations of Maximian were completed; and the orator presaged an assured victory. His silence in the second panegyric, might alone inform us, that the expedition had not succeeded.

nours.

nours³⁰. But the adoption of the two Cæfars restored new vigour to the Roman arms; and while the Rhine was guarded by the presence of Maximian, his brave associate Constantius assumed the conduct of the British war. His first enterprise was against the important place of Boulogne. A stupendous mole, raised across the entrance of the harbour, intercepted all hopes of relief. The town surrendered after an obstinate defence; and a considerable part of the naval strength of Carausius fell into the hands of the besiegers. During the three years which Constantius employed in preparing a fleet adequate to the conquest of Britain, he secured the coast of Gaul, invaded the country of the Franks, and deprived the usurper of the assistance of those powerful allies.

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A.D. 293.

Before the preparations were finished, Constantius received the intelligence of the tyrant's death, and it was considered as a sure presage of the approaching victory. The servants of Carausius imitated the example of treason, which he had given. He was murdered by his first minister Allectus, and the assassin succeeded to his power and to his danger. But he possessed not equal abilities, either to exercise the one, or to repel the other. He beheld, with anxious terror, the opposite shores of the continent, already filled with arms, with troops, and with

A.D. 294.
His death.

³⁰ Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, and the medals (*Pax Augg.*) inform us of this temporary reconciliation; though I will not presume (as Dr. Stukely has done, *Medallic History of Carausius*, p. 86, &c.) to insert the identical articles of the treaty.

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A. D. 296.
Recovery
of Britain
by Con-
stantius.

vessels; for Constantius had very prudently divided his forces, that he might likewise divide the attention and resistance of the enemy. The attack was at length made by the principal squadron, which, under the command of the præfect Asclepiodatus, an officer of distinguished merit, had been assembled in the mouth of the Seine. So imperfect in those times was the art of navigation, that orators have celebrated the daring courage of the Romans, who ventured to set sail with a side-wind, and on a stormy day. The weather proved favourable to their enterprise. Under the cover of a thick fog, they escaped the fleet of Allectus, which had been stationed off the Isle of Wight to receive them, landed in safety on some part of the western coast, and convinced the Britons, that a superiority of naval strength will not always protect their country from a foreign invasion. Asclepiodatus had no sooner disembarked the Imperial troops, than he set fire to his ships; and, as the expedition proved fortunate, his heroic conduct was universally admired. The usurper had posted himself near London, to expect the formidable attack of Constantius, who commanded in person the fleet of Boulogne; but the descent of a new enemy required his immediate presence in the West. He performed this long march in so precipitate a manner, that he encountered the whole force of the præfect with a small body of harassed and disheartened troops. The engagement was soon terminated by the total defeat and death of

8

Allectus;

Allectus ; a single battle, as it has often happened, decided the fate of this great island ; and when Constantius landed on the shores of Kent, he found them covered with obedient subjects. Their acclamations were loud and unanimous ; and the virtues of the conqueror may induce us to believe, that they sincerely rejoiced in a revolution, which, after a separation of ten years, restored Britain to the body of the Roman empire³¹.

Britain had none but domestic enemies to dread ; and as long as the governors preserved their fidelity, and the troops their discipline, the incursions of the naked savages of Scotland or Ireland could never materially affect the safety of the province. The peace of the continent, and the defence of the principal rivers which bounded the empire, were objects of far greater difficulty and importance. The policy of Diocletian, which inspired the councils of his associates, provided for the public tranquillity, by encouraging a spirit of dissension among the barbarians, and by strengthening the fortifications of the Roman limit. In the East he fixed a line of camps from Egypt to the Persian dominions, and for every camp he instituted an adequate number of stationary troops, commanded by their respective officers, and supplied with every kind of arms, from the new arsenals which he had formed at Antioch, Emesa, and Damas-

Defence of
the fron-
tiers.

Fortifica-
tions.

³¹ With regard to the recovery of Britain, we obtain a few hints from Aurelius Victor and Eutropius.

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Diffensions
of the bar-
barians.

Conduct of
the empe-
rors.

cus³². Nor was the precaution of the emperor less watchful against the well-known valour of the barbarians of Europe. From the mouth of the Rhine to that of the Danube, the ancient camps, towns, and citadels, were diligently re-established, and, in the most exposed places, new ones were skilfully constructed; the strictest vigilance was introduced among the garrisons of the frontier, and every expedient was practised that could render the long chain of fortifications firm and impenetrable³³. A barrier so respectable was seldom violated, and the barbarians often turned against each other their disappointed rage. The Goths, the Vandals, the Gepidæ, the Burgundians, the Alemanni, wasted each other's strength by destructive hostilities, and whosoever vanquished, they vanquished the enemies of Rome. The subjects of Diocletian enjoyed the bloody spectacle, and congratulated each other, that the mischiefs of civil war were now experienced only by the barbarians³⁴.

Notwithstanding the policy of Diocletian, it was impossible to maintain an equal and undisturbed tranquillity during a reign of twenty

³² John Malela, in Chron. Antiochen, tom. i. p. 408, 409.

³³ Zosim. l. i. p. 3. That partial historian seems to celebrate the vigilance of Diocletian, with a design of exposing the negligence of Constantine; we may, however, listen to an orator, "Nam quid ego alarum et cohortium castra percontem, toto Rheni et Istri et Euphratis limite restituta." Panegy. Vet. iv. 18.

³⁴ Ruunt omnes in sanguinem suum populi, quibus non contigit esse Romanis, obstinatæque feritatis pœnas nunc sponte perfolvunt. Panegy. Vet. iii. 16. Mamertinus illustrates the fact, by the example of almost all the nations of the world.

years, and along a frontier of many hundred miles. Sometimes the barbarians suspended their domestic animosities, and the relaxed vigilance of the garrisons sometimes gave a passage to their strength or dexterity. Whenever the provinces were invaded, Diocletian conducted himself with that calm dignity which he always affected or possessed; reserved his presence for such occasions as were worthy of his interposition, never exposed his person or reputation to any unnecessary danger, ensured his success by every means that prudence could suggest, and displayed, with ostentation, the consequences of his victory. In wars of a more difficult nature, and more doubtful event, he employed the rough valour of Maximian; and that faithful soldier was content to ascribe his own victories to the wise counsels and auspicious influence of his benefactor. But after the adoption of the two Cæsars, the emperors themselves retiring to a less laborious scene of action, devolved on their adopted sons the defence of the Danube and of the Rhine. The vigilant Galerius was never reduced to the necessity of vanquishing an army of barbarians on the Roman territory³⁵. The brave and active Constantius delivered Gaul from a very furious inroad of the Alemanni; and his victories of Langres and Vindonissa appear to have been actions of considerable danger and

Valour of
the Cæsars.

³⁵ He complained, though not with the strictest truth; "Jam sexisse annos quindecim in quibus, in Illyrico, ad ripam Danubii relegatus cum gentibus barbaris luctaret." Lactant. de M. P. c. 18.

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merit. As he traversed the open country with a feeble guard, he was encompassed on a sudden by the superior multitude of the enemy. He retreated with difficulty towards Langres; but, in the general consternation, the citizens refused to open their gates, and the wounded prince was drawn up the wall by the means of a rope. But, on the news of his distress, the Roman troops hastened from all sides to his relief, and before the evening he had satisfied his honour and revenge by the slaughter of six thousand Alemanni³⁶. From the monuments of those times, the obscure traces of several other victories over the barbarians of Sarmatia and Germany might possibly be collected; but the tedious search would not be rewarded either with amusement or with instruction.

Treatment
of the bar-
barians.

The conduct which the emperor Probus had adopted in the disposal of the vanquished, was imitated by Diocletian and his associates. The captive barbarians, exchanging death for slavery, were distributed among the provincials, and assigned to those districts (in Gaul, the territories of Amiens, Beauvais, Cambray, Treves, Langres, and Troyes, are particularly specified³⁷) which had been depopulated by the calamities of war. They were usefully employed as shepherds and husbandmen, but were denied the exercise

³⁶ In the Greek text of Eusebius, we read six thousand, a number which I have preferred to sixty thousand of Jerome, Orosius, Eusebius, and his Greek translator Pacianus.

³⁷ Panegy. Vet. vii. 21.

of arms, except when it was found expedient to enrol them in the military service. Nor did the emperors refuse the property of lands, with a less servile tenure, to such of the barbarians as solicited the protection of Rome. They granted a settlement to several colonies of the Carpi, the Bastarnæ, and the Sarmatians; and, by a dangerous indulgence, permitted them in some measure to retain their national manners and independence³⁸. Among the provincials, it was a subject of flattering exultation, that the barbarian, so lately an object of terror, now cultivated their lands, drove their cattle to the neighbouring fair, and contributed by his labour to the public plenty. They congratulated their masters on the powerful accession of subjects and foldiers; but they forgot to observe, that multitudes of secret enemies, insolent from favour, or desperate from oppression, were introduced into the heart of the empire³⁹.

While the Cæsars exercised their valour on the banks of the Rhine and Danube, the presence of the emperors was required on the southern confines of the Roman world. From the Nile

Wars of
Africa and
Egypt.

³⁸ There was a settlement of the Sarmatians in the neighbourhood of Treves, which seems to have been deserted by those lazy Barbarians: Ausonius speaks of them in his *Moselle*;

Unde iter ingrediens nemorosa per avia solum,
Et nulla humani spectans vestigia cultus

- - - - -

Arvaque Sauromatùm nuper metata colonis.

There was a town of the Carpi in the Lower *Mæzia*.

³⁹ See the rhetorical exultation of Eumenius. *Panegy.* vii. 9.

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to mount Atlas, Africa was in arms. A confederacy of five Moorish nations issued from their deserts to invade the peaceful provinces ⁴⁰, Julian had assumed the purple at Carthage ⁴¹, Achilleus at Alexandria, and even the Blemmyes, renewed, or rather continued, their incursions into the Upper Egypt. Scarcely any circumstances have been preserved of the exploits of Maximian in the western parts of Africa; but it appears by the event, that the progress of his arms was rapid and decisive, that he vanquished the fiercest barbarians of Mauritania, and that he removed them from the mountains, whose inaccessible strength had inspired their inhabitants with a lawless confidence, and habituated them to a life of rapine and violence ⁴². Diocletian, on his side, opened the campaign in Egypt by the siege of Alexandria, cut off the aqueducts which conveyed the waters of the Nile into every quarter of that immense city ⁴³, and rendering his camp impregnable to the sallies of the besieged multitude, he pushed his reiterated attacks with caution and vigour. After a siege of eight months, Alexandria, wasted by the sword

A.D. 296.
Conduct of
Diocletian
in Egypt.

⁴⁰ Scaliger (*Animadvers. ad Euseb. p. 243.*) decides in his usual manner, that the *Quinque gentiani*, or five African nations, were the five great cities, the *Pentapolis* of the inoffensive province of Cyrene.

⁴¹ After his defeat, Julian stabbed himself with a dagger, and immediately leaped into the flames. Victor in *Epitome*.

⁴² *Tu ferocissimos Mauritanie populos inaccessis montium jugis et naturali munitione fidentes, expugnasti, recipisti, transtulisti. Pagan. Vet. vi. 8.*

⁴³ See the description of Alexandria, in *Hirtius de Bel. Alexandrin. c. 5.*

and

and by fire, implored the clemency of the conqueror; but it experienced the full extent of his severity. Many thousands of the citizens perished in a promiscuous slaughter, and there were few obnoxious persons in Egypt who escaped a sentence either of death, or at least of exile⁴⁴. The fate of Eufiris and of Coptos was still more melancholy than that of Alexandria; those proud cities, the former distinguished by its antiquity, the latter enriched by the passage of the Indian trade, were utterly destroyed by the arms and by the severe order of Diocletian⁴⁵. The character of the Egyptian nation, insensible to kindness, but extremely susceptible of fear, could alone justify this excessive rigour. The seditions of Alexandria had often affected the tranquillity and subsistence of Rome itself. Since the usurpation of Firmus, the province of Upper Egypt, incessantly relapsing into rebellion, had embraced the alliance of the savages of Æthiopia. The number of the Blemmyes, scattered between the island of Meroe and the Red Sea, was very inconsiderable, their disposition was unwarlike, their weapons rude and inoffensive⁴⁶. Yet in the public disorders these barbarians, whom anti-

⁴⁴ Eutrop. ix. 24. Orosius, vii. 25. John Malela in Chron. Antioch. p. 409, 410. Yet Eumenius assures us, that Egypt was pacified by the clemency of Diocletian.

⁴⁵ Eusebius (in Chron.) places their destruction several years sooner, and at a time when Egypt itself was in a state of rebellion against the Romans.

⁴⁶ Strabo, l. xvii. p. 1. 172. Pomponius Mela, l. i. c. 4. His words are curious, "Intra, si credere libet, vix homines magisque femiferi; Ægipanes, et Blemmyes, et Satyri."

quity, shocked with the deformity of their figure, had almost excluded from the human species, presumed to rank themselves among the enemies of Rome⁴⁷. Such had been the unworthy allies of the Egyptians; and while the attention of the state was engaged in more serious wars, their vexatious inroads might again harass the repose of the province. With a view of opposing to the Blemmyes a suitable adversary, Diocletian persuaded the Nobatæ, or people of Nubia, to remove from their ancient habitations in the deserts of Lybia, and resigned to them an extensive but unprofitable territory above Syene and the cataracts of the Nile, with the stipulation, that they should ever respect and guard the frontier of the empire. The treaty long subsisted; and till the establishment of Christianity introduced stricter notions of religious worship, it was annually ratified by a solemn sacrifice in the isle of Elephantine, in which the Romans, as well as the barbarians, adored the same visible or invisible powers of the universe⁴⁸.

At the same time that Diocletian chastised the past crimes of the Egyptians, he provided for their future safety and happiness by many wise regulations which were confirmed and enforced under the succeeding reigns⁴⁹. One very remarkable edict, which he published, instead of being con-

⁴⁷ *Aufus sese inferere fortunæ et provocare arma Romana.*

⁴⁸ See Procopius de Bell. Persic. l. i. c. 19.

⁴⁹ He fixed the public allowance of corn for the people of Alexandria, at two millions of *medimni*; about four hundred thousand quarters. Chron. Paschal. p. 276. Procop. Hist. Arcan. c. 26.

demned

demned as the effect of jealous tyranny, deserves to be applauded as an act of prudence and humanity.

He caused a diligent enquiry to be made "for all the
 "ancient books which treated of the admirable
 "art of making gold and silver, and without
 "pity committed them to the flames; apprehen-
 "sive, as we are assured, lest the opulence of
 "the Egyptians should inspire them with confi-
 "dence to rebel against the empire"⁵⁰." But if
 Diocletian had been convinced of the reality of
 that valuable art; far from extinguishing the me-
 mory, he would have converted the operation of
 it to the benefit of the public revenue. It is
 much more likely, that his good sense discovered
 to him the folly of such magnificent pretensions,
 and that he was desirous of preserving the reason
 and fortunes of his subjects from the mischievous
 pursuit. It may be remarked, that these ancient
 books, so liberally ascribed to Pythagoras, to
 Solomon, or to Hermes, were the pious frauds
 of more recent adepts. The Greeks were inat-
 tentive either to the use or to the abuse of chy-
 mistry. In that immense register, where Pliny
 has deposited the discoveries, the arts, and the
 errors of mankind, there is not the least mention
 of the transmutation of metals; and the persecu-
 tion of Diocletian is the first authentic event in
 the history of alchymy. The conquest of Egypt
 by the Arabs diffused that vain science over the
 globe. Congenial to the avarice of the human
 heart, it was studied in China as in Europe, with

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He sup-
presses
books of
alchymy.

Novelty
and pro-
gress of
that art.

⁵⁰ John Antioch in Excerpt. Valesian, p. 834. Suidas in Diocletian.

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equal eagerness, and with equal success. The darkness of the middle ages ensured a favourable reception to every tale of wonder, and the revival of learning gave new vigour to hope, and suggested more specious arts of deception. Philosophy, with the aid of experience, has at length banished the study of alchymy; and the present age, however desirous of riches, is content to seek them by the humbler means of commerce and industry⁵¹.

The Persian war.

The reduction of Egypt was immediately followed by the Persian war. It was reserved for the reign of Diocletian to vanquish that powerful nation, and to extort a confession from the successors of Artaxerxes, of the superior majesty of the Roman empire.

Tiridates
the Armenian.

We have observed under the reign of Valerian, that Armenia was subdued by the perfidy and the arms of the Persians, and that, after the assassination of Chosroes, his son Tiridates, the infant heir of the monarchy, was saved by the fidelity of his friends, and educated under the protection of the emperors. Tiridates derived from his exile such advantages as he could never have obtained on the throne of Armenia; the early knowledge of adversity, of mankind, and of the Roman discipline. He signalized his youth by deeds of valour, and displayed a matchless dexterity, as well as strength, in every martial exercise, and even in the less honourable contests

⁵¹ See a short history and confutation of alchymy, in the works of that philosophical compiler, La Mothe le Vayer, tom. i. p. 327—353.
of

of the Olympian games⁵². Those qualities were more nobly exerted in the defence of his benefactor Licinius⁵³. That officer, in the sedition which occasioned the death of Probus, was exposed to the most imminent danger, and the enraged soldiers were forcing their way into his tent, when they were checked by the single arm of the Armenian prince. The gratitude of Tiridates contributed soon afterwards to his restoration. Licinius was in every station the friend and companion of Galerius, and the merit of Galerius, long before he was raised to the dignity of Cæsar, had been known and esteemed by Diocletian. In the third year of that emperor's reign, Tiridates was invested with the kingdom of Armenia. The justice of the measure was not less evident than its expediency. It was time to rescue from the usurpation of the Persian monarch, an important territory, which, since the reign of Nero, had been always granted under the protection of the empire to a younger branch of the house of Arsaces⁵⁴.

⁵² See the education and strength of Tiridates in the Armenian history of Moses of Chorene, l. ii. c. 76. He could seize two wild bulls by the horns, and break them off with his hands.

⁵³ If we give credit to the younger Victor, who supposes that in the year 323, Licinius was only sixty years of age, he could scarcely be the same person as the patron of Tiridates; but we know from much better authority (Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. x. c. 8.), that Licinius was at that time in the last period of old age; sixteen years before, he is represented with grey hairs, and as the contemporary of Galerius. See Lactant. c. 32. Licinius was probably born about the year 250.

⁵⁴ See the sixty-second and sixty-third books of Dion Cassius.

When

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A.D. 286.
His resto-
ration to
the throne
of Arme-
nia.

State of the
country.

Revolt of
the people
and nobles.

When Tiridates appeared on the frontiers of Armenia, he was received with an unfeigned transport of joy and loyalty. During twenty-six years, the country had experienced the real and imaginary hardships of a foreign yoke. The Persian monarchs adorned their new conquest with magnificent buildings; but those monuments had been erected at the expence of the people, and were abhorred as badges of slavery. The apprehension of a revolt had inspired the most rigorous precautions: oppression had been aggravated by insult, and the consciousness of the public hatred had been productive of every measure that could render it still more implacable. We have already remarked the intolerant spirit of the Magian religion. The statues of the deified kings of Armenia, and the sacred images of the sun and moon, were broke in pieces by the zeal of the conqueror; and the perpetual fire of Ormuzd was kindled and preserved upon an altar erected on the summit of mount Bagavan^{ss}. It was natural, that a people exasperated by so many injuries, should arm with zeal in the cause of their independence, their religion, and their hereditary sovereignty. The torrent bore down every obstacle, and the Persian garrisons retreated before its fury. The nobles of Armenia flew to

^{ss} Moses of Chorene, Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 74. The statues had been erected by Valarfaces, who reigned in Armenia about 130 years before Christ, and was the first king of the family of Arsaces (see Moses Hist. Armen. l. ii. 2, 3.). The deification of the Arsacides is mentioned by Justin (xli. 5.) and by Ammianus Marcellinus (xxiii. 6.).

the

the standard of Tiridates, all alleging their past merit, offering their future service, and soliciting from the new king those honours and rewards from which they had been excluded with disdain under the foreign government⁵⁶. The command of the army was bestowed on Artavasdes, whose father had saved the infancy of Tiridates, and whose family had been massacred for that generous action. The brother of Artavasdes obtained the government of a province. One of the first military dignities was conferred on the satrap Otas, a man of singular temperance and fortitude, who presented to the king, his sister⁵⁷ and a considerable treasure, both of which, in a sequestered fortress, Otas had preserved from violation. Among the Armenian nobles appeared an ally, whose fortunes are too remarkable to pass unnoticed. His name was Mamgo, his origin was Scythian, and the horde which acknowledged his authority, had encamped a very few years before on the skirts of the Chinese empire⁵⁸, which at that time extended as far as the neigh-

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Mamgo.

⁵⁶ The Armenian nobility was numerous and powerful. Moses mentions many families which were distinguished under the reign of Valaraces (l. ii. 7.), and which still subsisted in his own time, about the middle of the fifth century. See the preface of his Editors.

⁵⁷ She was named Chosroiduchta, and had not the *os patulum* like other women. (Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 79.) I do not understand the expression.

⁵⁸ In the Armenian History (l. ii. 78.), as well as in the Geography (p. 367.), China is called Zenia, or Zenistan. It is characterized by the production of silk, by the opulence of the natives, and by their love of peace, above all the other nations of the earth.

bourhood

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bourhood of Sogdiana⁵⁹. Having incurred the displeasure of his master, Mamgo, with his followers, retired to the banks of the Oxus, and implored the protection of Sapor. The emperor of China claimed the fugitive, and alleged the rights of sovereignty. The Persian monarch pleaded the laws of hospitality, and with some difficulty avoided a war, by the promise that he would banish Mamgo to the uttermost parts of the West; a punishment, as he described it, not less dreadful than death itself. Armenia was chosen for the place of exile, and a large district was assigned to the Scythian horde, on which they might feed their flocks and herds, and remove their encampment from one place to another, according to the different seasons of the year. They were employed to repel the invasion of Tiridates; but their leader, after weighing the obligations and injuries which he had received from the Persian monarch, resolved to abandon his party. The Armenian prince, who was well acquainted with the merit as well as power of Mamgo, treated him with distinguished respect; and by admitting him into his confidence, ac-

⁵⁹ Vou-ti, the first emperor of the seventh dynasty, who then reigned in China, had political transactions with Fergana, a province of Sogdiana, and is said to have received a Roman embassy (*Histoire des Huns*, tom. i. p. 38.). In those ages the Chinese kept a garrison at Kashgar, and one of their generals, about the time of Trajan, marched as far as the Caspian Sea. With regard to the intercourse between China and the western countries, a curious memoir of M. de Guignes may be consulted, in the *Academie des Inscriptions*, tom. xxii. p. 355.

quired

quired a brave and faithful servant, who contributed very effectually to his restoration⁶⁰.

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The Persians recover Armenia.

For a while, fortune appeared to favour the enterprising valour of Tiridates. He not only expelled the enemies of his family and country from the whole extent of Armenia, but in the prosecution of his revenge he carried his arms, or at least his incursions, into the heart of Assyria. The historian, who has preserved the name of Tiridates from oblivion, celebrates with a degree of national enthusiasm, his personal prowess; and, in the true spirit of eastern romance, describes the giants and the elephants that fell beneath his invincible arm. It is from other information that we discover the distracted state of the Persian monarchy, to which the king of Armenia was indebted for some part of his advantages. The throne was disputed by the ambition of contending brothers; and Hormuz, after exerting without success the strength of his own party, had recourse to the dangerous assistance of the barbarians who inhabited the banks of the Caspian Sea⁶¹. The civil war was, however, soon terminated, either by a victory, or by a reconciliation; and Narses, who was universally acknowledged as king of Persia, directed his whole

⁶⁰ See Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 81.

⁶¹ *Ipsos Persas ipsumque Regem ascitis Saccis, et Russis, et Gellis, petit frater Osmies. Panegyric. Vet. iii. 1.* The Saccæ were a nation of wandering Scythians, who encamped towards the sources of the Oxus and the Jaxartes. The Gelli were the inhabitants of Ghilan along the Caspian Sea, and who so long, under the name of Dilemites, infested the Persian monarchy. See d'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*.

force

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force against the foreign enemy. The contest then became too unequal; nor was the valour of the hero able to withstand the power of the monarch. Tiridates, a second time expelled from the throne of Armenia, once more took refuge in the court of the emperors. Narses soon re-established his authority over the revolted province; and loudly complaining of the protection afforded by the Romans to rebels and fugitives, aspired to the conquest of the East ⁶².

War between the
Persians
and the
Romans.
A.D. 296.

Neither prudence nor honour could permit the emperors to forsake the cause of the Armenian king, and it was resolved to exert the force of the empire in the Persian war. Diocletian, with the calm dignity which he constantly assumed, fixed his own station in the city of Antioch, from whence he prepared and directed the military operations ⁶³. The conduct of the legions was intrusted to the intrepid valour of Galerius, who, for that important purpose, was removed from the banks of the Danube to those of the Euphrates.

Defeat of
Galerius.

The armies soon encountered each other in the plains of Mesopotamia, and two battles were fought with various and doubtful success: but the third engagement was of a more decisive

⁶² Moses of Chorene takes no notice of this second revolution, which I have been obliged to collect from a passage of Ammianus Marcellinus (l. xxiii. 5.). Lactantius speaks of the ambition of Narses, "Concitatus domesticis exemplis avi sui Saporis ad occupandum orientem magnis copiis inhiabat." De Mort. Persecut. c. 9.

⁶³ We may readily believe, that Lactantius ascribes to cowardice the conduct of Diocletian. Julian, in his oration, says, that he remained with all the forces of the empire; a very hyperbolical expression.

nature;

nature ; and the Roman army received a total overthrow, which is attributed to the rashness of Galerius, who, with an inconsiderable body of troops, attacked the innumerable host of the Persians⁶⁴. But the consideration of the country that was the scene of action, may suggest another reason for his defeat. The same ground on which Galerius was vanquished, had been rendered memorable by the death of Crassus, and the slaughter of ten legions. It was a plain of more than sixty miles, which extended from the hills of Carrhæ to the Euphrates ; a smooth and barren surface of sandy desert, without a hillock, without a tree, and without a spring of fresh water⁶⁵. The steady infantry of the Romans, fainting with heat and thirst, could neither hope for victory if they preserved their ranks, nor break their ranks without exposing themselves to the most imminent danger. In this situation they were gradually encompassed by the superior numbers, harassed by the rapid evolutions, and destroyed by the arrows, of the barbarian cavalry. The king of Armenia had signalized his valour in the battle, and acquired personal glory by the public misfortune. He was pursued as far as the Euphrates ; his horse was wounded, and it appeared impossible for him to escape the victorious enemy.

⁶⁴ Our five abbreviators, Eutropius, Festus, the two Victors, and Orofius, all relate the last and great battle ; but Orofius is the only one who speaks of the two former.

⁶⁵ The nature of the country is finely described by Plutarch, in the life of Crassus ; and by Xenophon, in the first book of the Anabasis.

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His reception by Diocletian.

Second campaign of Galerius.
A. D. 297.

In this extremity Tiridates embraced the only refuge which he saw before him: he dismounted and plunged into the stream. His armour was heavy, the river very deep, and at those parts at least half a mile in breadth⁶⁶; yet such was his strength and dexterity, that he reached in safety the opposite bank⁶⁷. With regard to the Roman general, we are ignorant of the circumstances of his escape; but when he returned to Antioch, Diocletian received him, not with the tenderness of a friend and colleague, but with the indignation of an offended sovereign. The haughtiest of men, clothed in his purple, but humbled by the sense of his fault and misfortune, was obliged to follow the emperor's chariot above a mile on foot, and to exhibit before the whole court the spectacle of his disgrace⁶⁸.

As soon as Diocletian had indulged his private resentment, and asserted the majesty of supreme power, he yielded to the submissive entreaties of the Cæsar, and permitted him to retrieve his own honour, as well as that of the Roman arms. In the room of the unwarlike troops of Asia, which had most probably served in the first expedition, a second army was drawn from the veterans and new levies of the Illyrian frontier, and a confi-

⁶⁶ See Foster's Dissertation in the second volume of the translation of the *Anabasis* by Spelman; which I will venture to recommend as one of the best versions extant.

⁶⁷ Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 76. I have transferred this exploit of Tiridates from an imaginary defeat to the real one of Galerius.

⁶⁸ Ammian. Marcellin. l. xiv. The mile, in the hands of Eutropius (ix. 24.), of Festus (c. 25.), and of Orosius (vii. 25.), easily increased to *several* miles.

derable

derable body of Gothic auxiliaries were taken into the Imperial pay⁶⁹. At the head of a chosen army of twenty-five thousand men, Galerius again passed the Euphrates; but, instead of exposing his legions in the open plains of Mesopotamia, he advanced through the mountains of Armenia, where he found the inhabitants devoted to his cause, and the country as favourable to the operations of infantry, as it was inconvenient for the motions of cavalry⁷⁰. Adversity had confirmed the Roman discipline, while the barbarians, elated by success, were become so negligent and remiss, that in the moment when they least expected it, they were surprised by the active conduct of Galerius, who, attended only by two horsemen, had with his own eyes secretly examined the state and position of their camp. A surprise, especially in the night-time, was for the most part fatal to a Persian army. "Their horses were tied, and generally shackled, to prevent their running away; and if an alarm happened, a Persian had his housing to fix, his horse to bridle, and his corslet to put on, before he could mount"⁷¹. On this occasion, the impetuous attack of Galerius spread disorder and dismay over the camp of the barbarians. A slight resistance was followed by a dreadful car-

His v. 10.
71

⁶⁹ Aurelius Victor. Jornandes de Rebus Geticis, c. 21.

⁷⁰ Aurelius Victor says, "Per Armeniam in hostes contendit, que ferme sola, seu facilius vincendi via est." He followed the conduct of Trajan, and the idea of Julius Cæsar.

⁷¹ Xenophon's Anabasis, l. iii. For that reason the Persian cavalry encamped sixty stadia from the enemy.

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and beha-
viour to
his royal
captives.

Negocia-
tion for
peace.

nage, and, in the general confusion, the wounded monarch (for Narses commanded his armies in person) fled towards the deserts of Media. His sumptuous tents, and those of his satraps, afforded an immense booty to the conqueror; and an incident is mentioned, which proves the rustic but martial ignorance of the legions, in the elegant superfluities of life. A bag of shining leather, filled with pearls, fell into the hands of a private soldier; he carefully preserved the bag, but he threw away its contents, judging that whatever was of no use could not possibly be of any value⁷². The principal loss of Narses was of a much more affecting nature. Several of his wives, his sisters, and children, who had attended the army, were made captives in the defeat. But though the character of Galerius had in general very little affinity with that of Alexander, he imitated, after his victory, the amiable behaviour of the Macedonian towards the family of Darius. The wives and children of Narses were protected from violence and rapine, conveyed to a place of safety, and treated with every mark of respect and tenderness, that was due from a generous enemy, to their age, their sex, and their royal dignity⁷³.

While the East anxiously expected the decision of this great contest, the emperor Diocletian,

⁷² The story is told by Ammianus, l. xxii. Instead of *sacrum* some read *scutum*.

⁷³ The Persians confessed the Roman superiority in morals as well as in arms. Eutrop. ix. 24. But this respect and gratitude of enemies is very seldom to be found in their own accounts.

having

having assembled in Syria a strong army of observation, displayed from a distance the resources of the Roman power, and reserved himself for any future emergency of the war. On the intelligence of the victory, he condescended to advance towards the frontier, with a view of moderating, by his presence and counsels, the pride of Galerius. The interview of the Roman princes at Nisibis was accompanied with every expression of respect on one side, and of esteem on the other. It was in that city that they soon afterwards gave audience to the ambassador of the Great King ⁷⁴. The power, or at least the spirit of Narses, had been broken by his last defeat; and he considered an immediate peace as the only means that could stop the progress of the Roman arms. He dispatched Apharban, a servant who possessed his favour and confidence, with a commission to negotiate a treaty, or rather to receive whatever conditions the conqueror should impose. Apharban opened the conference by expressing his master's gratitude for the generous treatment of his family, and by soliciting the liberty of those illustrious captives. He celebrated the valour of Galerius, without degrading the reputation of Narses, and thought it no dishonour to confess the superiority of the victorious Cæsar, over a monarch who had surpassed in glory all

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Speech of
the Persian
ambassa-
dor.

⁷⁴ The account of the negotiation is taken from the fragments of Peter the Patrician, in the *Excerpta Legationum* published in the *Byzantine Collection*. Peter lived under Justinian; but it is very evident, by the nature of his materials, that they are drawn from the most authentic and respectable writers.

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the princes of his race. Notwithstanding the justice of the Persian cause, he was empowered to submit the present differences to the decision of the emperors themselves; convinced as he was, that, in the midst of prosperity, they would not be unmindful of the vicissitudes of fortune. Apharban concluded his discourse in the style of eastern allegory, by observing that the Roman and Persian monarchies were the two eyes of the world, which would remain imperfect and mutilated if either of them should be put out.

Answer of
Galerius.

“It well becomes the Persians,” replied Galerius, with a transport of fury which seemed to convulse his whole frame, “it well becomes the Persians to expatiate on the vicissitudes of fortune, and calmly to read us lectures on the virtues of moderation. Let them remember their own *moderation* towards the unhappy Valerian. They vanquished him by fraud, they treated him with indignity. They detained him till the last moment of his life in shameful captivity, and after his death they exposed his body to perpetual ignominy.” Softening, however, his tone, Galerius insinuated to the ambassador, that it had never been the practice of the Romans to trample on a prostrate enemy; and that, on this occasion, they should consult their own dignity; rather than the Persian merit. He dismissed Apharban with a hope, that Narfes would soon be informed on what conditions he might obtain, from the clemency of the emperors, a lasting peace, and the restoration of his

wives and children. In this conference we may discover the fierce passions of Galerius, as well as his deference to the superior wisdom and authority of Diocletian. The ambition of the former grasped at the conquest of the East, and had proposed to reduce Persia into the state of a province. The prudence of the latter, who adhered to the moderate policy of Augustus and the Antonines, embraced the favourable opportunity of terminating a successful war by an honourable and advantageous peace⁷⁵.

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tion of Di-
ocletian.

In pursuance of their promise, the emperors soon afterwards appointed Sicorius Probus, one of their secretaries, to acquaint the Persian court with their final resolution. As the minister of peace, he was received with every mark of politeness and friendship; but under the pretence of allowing him the necessary repose after so long a journey, the audience of Probus was deferred from day to day; and he attended the slow motions of the king, till at length he was admitted to his presence, near the river Asprudus in Media. The secret motive of Narses in this delay, had been to collect such a military force, as might enable him, though sincerely desirous of peace, to negotiate with the greater weight and dignity. Three persons only assisted at this important conference, the minister Apharban, the præfect of the guards, and an officer who had commanded

Conclu-
sion,

⁷⁵ Adeo Victor (says Aurelius) ut ni Valerius, cujus nutu omnia gerebantur, abnuisset, Romani fasces in provinciam novam ferrentur. Verum pars terrarum tamen nobis utilior quæsit.

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on the Armenian frontier ⁷⁶. The first condition proposed by the ambassador, is not at present of a very intelligible nature; that the city of Nisibis might be established for the place of mutual exchange, or, as we should formerly have termed it, for the staple of trade between the two empires. There is no difficulty in conceiving the intention of the Roman princes to improve their revenue by some restraints upon commerce; but as Nisibis was situated within their own dominions, and as they were masters both of the imports and exports, it should seem that such restraints were the objects of an internal law, rather than of a foreign treaty. To render them more effectual, some stipulations were probably required on the side of the king of Persia, which appeared so very repugnant either to his interest or to his dignity, that Narses could not be persuaded to subscribe them. As this was the only article to which he refused his consent, it was no longer insisted on; and the emperors either suffered the trade to flow in its natural channels, or contented themselves with such restrictions, as it depended on their own authority to establish.

and articles
of the
treaty.

As soon as this difficulty was removed, a solemn peace was concluded and ratified between the two nations. The conditions of a treaty so glorious to the empire, and so necessary to Persia,

⁷⁶ He had been governor of Sumium (Pet. Patricius in Excerpt. Legat. p. 30.). This province seems to be mentioned by Moses of Chorene (Geograph. p. 360.), and lay to the East of Mount Ararat.

may deserve a more peculiar attention, as the history of Rome presents very few transactions of a similar nature; most of her wars having either been terminated by absolute conquest, or waged against barbarians ignorant of the use of letters.

I. The Aboras, or, as it is called by Xenophon, the Araxes, was fixed as the boundary between the two monarchies⁷⁷. That river, which rose near the Tigris, was increased a few miles below Nisibis, by the little stream of the Mygdonius, passed under the walls of Singara, and fell into the Euphrates at Circesium, a frontier town, which, by the care of Diocletian, was very strongly fortified⁷⁸. Mesopotamia, the object of so many wars, was ceded to the empire; and the Persians, by this treaty, renounced all pretensions to that great province. II. They relinquished to the Romans five provinces beyond the Tigris⁷⁹. Their situation formed a very useful barrier, and their natural strength was soon im-

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The Araxes fixed as the limits between the empires.

Cession of five provinces beyond the Tigris.

⁷⁷ By an error of the geographer Ptolemy, the position of Singara is removed from the Aboras to the Tigris, which may have produced the mistake of Peter, in assigning the latter river for the boundary, instead of the former. The line of the Roman frontier traversed, but never followed, the course of the Tigris.

⁷⁸ Procopius de Edificiis, l. ii. c. 6.

⁷⁹ Three of the provinces, Zabdicene, Arzanene, and Carduene, are allowed on all sides. But instead of the other two, Peter (in Excerpt. Leg. p. 30.) inserts Rehimene and Sophene. I have preferred Ammianus (l. xxv. 7.), because it might be proved, that Sophene was never in the hands of the Persians, either before the reign of Diocletian, or after that of Jovian. For want of correct maps, like those of M. d'Anville, almost all the moderns, with l'illemont and Valesius at their head, have imagined, that it was in respect to Persia, and not to Rome, that the five provinces were situate beyond the Tigris.

proved

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Armenia.

proved by art and military skill. Four of these, to the north of the river, were districts of obscure fame and inconsiderable extent; Intiline, Zabdicene, Arzanene, and Moxoene: but on the east of the Tigris, the empire acquired the large and mountainous territory of Carduene, the ancient seat of the Carduchians, who preserved for many ages their manly freedom in the heart of the despotic monarchies of Asia. The ten thousand Greeks traversed their country, after a painful march, or rather engagement, of seven days; and it is confessed by their leader, in his incomparable relation of the retreat, that they suffered more from the arrows of the Carduchians, than from the power of the Great King⁸⁰. Their posterity, the Curds, with very little alteration either of name or manners, acknowledged the nominal sovereignty of the Turkish sultan. III. It is almost needless to observe, that Tiridates, the faithful ally of Rome, was restored to the throne of his fathers, and that the rights of the Imperial supremacy were fully asserted and secured. The limits of Armenia were extended as far as the fortress of Sintha in Media, and this increase of dominion was not so much an act of liberality as of justice. Of the provinces already mentioned beyond the Tigris, the four first had been dismembered by the Parthians from the

⁸⁰ Xenophon's *Anabasis*, l. iv. Their bows were three cubits in length, their arrows two; they rolled down stones that were each a waggon load. The Greeks found a great many villages in that rude country.

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crown of Armenia²¹; and when the Romans acquired the possession of them, they stipulated, at the expence of the usurpers, an ample compensation, which invested their ally with the extensive and fertile country of Atropatene. Its principal city, in the same situation perhaps as the modern Tauris, was frequently honoured with the residence of Tiridates; and as it sometimes bore the name of Ecbatana, he imitated, in the buildings and fortifications, the splendid capital of the Medes²². IV. The country of Iberia was barren, its inhabitants rude and savage. But they were accustomed to the use of arms, and they separated from the empire barbarians much fiercer and more formidable than themselves. The narrow defiles of Mount Caucasus were in their hands, and it was in their choice, either to admit or to exclude the wandering tribes of Sarmatia, whenever a rapacious spirit urged them to penetrate into the richer climes of the South²³. The nomination of the kings of Iberia, which was resigned by the Persian monarch to the emperors, contributed to the strength and security of the Roman power in Asia²⁴. The East en-

Iberia.

²¹ According to Eutropius (vi. 9. as the text is represented by the best MSS.), the city of Tigranocerta was in Arzanene. The names and situation of the other three may be faintly traced.

²² Compare Herodotus, l. i. c. 97. with Moses Choronenf. Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 84. and the map of Armenia given by his editors.

²³ Hiberi, locorum potentes, Caspia viâ Sarmatam in Armenios raptim effundunt. Tacit. Annal. vi. 34. See Strabon. Geograph. l. xi. p. 764.

²⁴ Peter Patricius (in Excerpt. Leg. p. 30.) is the only writer who mentions the Iberian article of the treaty.

joyed

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Triumph
of Diocle-
tian and
Maximian.
A. D. 303.
Nov. 20.

joyed a profound tranquillity during forty years; and the treaty between the rival monarchies was strictly observed till the death of Tiridates; when a new generation, animated with different views and different passions, succeeded to the government of the world; and the grandson of Narses undertook a long and memorable war against the princes of the house of Constantine.

The arduous work of rescuing the distressed empire from tyrants and barbarians had now been completely achieved by a succession of Illyrian peasants. As soon as Diocletian entered into the twentieth year of his reign, he celebrated that memorable ara, as well as the success of his arms, by the pomp of a Roman triumph⁸⁵. Maximian, the equal partner of his power, was his only companion in the glory of that day. The two Cæsars had fought and conquered, but the merit of their exploits was ascribed, according to the rigour of ancient maxims, to the auspicious influence of their fathers and emperors⁸⁶. The triumph of Diocletian and Maximian was less magnificent, perhaps, than those of Aurelian and Probus, but it was dignified by several circumstances of superior fame and good fortune. Africa and Britain, the Rhine, the Danube, and the Nile, furnished their respective trophies; but the most distinguished ornament was of a more

⁸⁵ Euseb. in Chron. Pagi ad annum. Till the discovery of the treatise *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, it was not certain that the triumph and the Vincenalia were celebrated at the same time.

⁸⁶ At the time of the Vincenalia, Galerius seems to have kept his station on the Danube. See Lactant, de M. P. c. 38.

singular

singular nature, a Persian victory followed by an important conquest. The representations of rivers, mountains, and provinces, were carried before the Imperial car. The images of the captive wives, the sisters, and the children of the Great King, afforded a new and grateful spectacle to the vanity of the people⁸⁷. In the eyes of posterity this triumph is remarkable, by a distinction of a less honourable kind. It was the last that Rome ever beheld. Soon after this period, the emperors ceased to vanquish, and Rome ceased to be the capital of the empire.

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The spot on which Rome was founded, had been consecrated by ancient ceremonies and imaginary miracles. The presence of some god, or the memory of some hero, seemed to animate every part of the city, and the empire of the world had been promised to the Capitol⁸⁸. The native Romans felt and confessed the power of this agreeable illusion. It was derived from their ancestors, had grown up with their earliest habits of life, and was protected, in some measure, by the opinion of political utility. The form and the seat of government were intimately blended together, nor was it esteemed possible to transport the one without destroying the

Long absence of the emperors from Rome.

⁸⁷ Eutropius (ix. 27.) mentions them as a part of the triumph. As the *persons* had been restored to Narses, nothing more than their *images* could be exhibited.

⁸⁸ Livy gives us a speech of Camillus on that subject (v. 51—55.), full of eloquence and sensibility, in opposition to a design of removing the seat of government from Rome to the neighbouring city of Veii.

other.

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Their re-
sidence at
Milan

other⁸⁹. But the sovereignty of the capital was gradually annihilated in the extent of conquest; the provinces rose to the same level, and the vanquished nations acquired the name and privileges, without imbibing the partial affections, of Romans. During a long period, however, the remains of the ancient constitution, and the influence of custom, preserved the dignity of Rome. The emperors, though perhaps of African or Illyrian extraction, respected their adopted country, as the seat of their power, and the centre of their extensive dominions. The emergencies of war very frequently required their presence on the frontiers; but Diocletian and Maximian were the first Roman princes who fixed, in time of peace, their ordinary residence in the provinces; and their conduct, however it might be suggested by private motives, was justified by very specious considerations of policy. The court of the emperor of the West was, for the most part, established at Milan, whose situation, at the foot of the Alps, appeared far more convenient than that of Rome, for the important purpose of watching the motions of the barbarians of Germany. Milan soon assumed the splendour of an Imperial city. The houses are described as numerous and well-

⁸⁹ Julius Cæsar was reproached with the intention of removing the empire to Ilium or Alexandria. See Sueton. in Cæsar, c. 79. According to the ingenious conjecture of Le Fevre and Dacier, the third ode of the third book of Horace was intended to divert Augustus from the execution of a similar design.

built;

built; the manners of the people as polished and liberal. A circus, a theatre, a mint, a palace, baths, which bore the name of their founder Maximian; porticoes adorned with statues, and a double circumference of walls, contributed to the beauty of the new capital; nor did it seem oppressed even by the proximity of Rome⁹⁰. To rival the majesty of Rome was the ambition likewise of Diocletian, who employed his leisure, and the wealth of the East, in the embellishment of Nicomedia, a city placed on the verge of Europe and Asia, almost at an equal distance between the Danube and the Euphrates. By the taste of the monarch, and at the expence of the people, Nicomedia acquired, in the space of a few years, a degree of magnificence which might appear to have required the labour of ages, and became inferior only to Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, in extent or populousness⁹¹. The life of Diocletian and Maximian was a life of action, and a considerable portion of it was

and Nico-
media.

⁹⁰ See Aurelius Victor, who likewise mentions the buildings erected by Maximian at Carthage, probably during the Moorish war. We shall insert some verses of Ausonius de Ciar. Urb. v.

Et Mediolani mira omnia : copia rerum ;
Innumeræ cultæque domus ; facunda virorum
Ingenia, et mores læti, tum duplici muro
Amplificata loci species ; populique voluptas
Circus ; et inclusi moles cuneata Theatri
Templa, Palatinæque arces, opulensque Moneta,
Et regio *Herculei* celebri sub honore lavacri.
Cunctæque marmoreis ornata Perystyla signis ;
Mœniæque in valli formam circumdata labro,
Omnia quæ magnis operum velut æmula formis
Excellunt : nec junctæ premit vicinia Romæ.

⁹¹ Laſtant. de M. P. c. 17. Libanius, Orat. viii. p. 203.

ſpent

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spent in camps, or in their long and frequent marches; but whenever the public business allowed them any relaxation, they seem to have retired with pleasure to their favourite residences of Nicomedia and Milan. Till Diocletian, in the twentieth year of his reign, celebrated his Roman triumph, it is extremely doubtful whether he ever visited the ancient capital of the empire. Even on that memorable occasion his stay did not exceed two months. Disgusted with the licentious familiarity of the people, he quitted Rome with precipitation thirteen days before it was expected that he should have appeared in the senate, invested with the ensigns of the consular dignity⁹².

Debasement of
Rome and
of the se-
nate.

The dislike expressed by Diocletian towards Rome and Roman freedom, was not the effect of momentary caprice, but the result of the most artful policy. That crafty prince had framed a new system of Imperial government, which was afterwards completed by the family of Constantine; and as the image of the old constitution was religiously preserved in the senate, he resolved to deprive that order of its small remains of power and consideration. We may recollect, about eight years before the elevation of Diocletian, the transient greatness, and the ambitious hopes, of the Roman senate. As long as that enthusiasm prevailed, many of the nobles

⁹² Laëtant, de M. P. c. 17. On a similar occasion, Ammianus mentions the *dicacitas p'ebis*, as not very agreeable to an Imperial ear. (See l. xvi. c. 10.)

impru-

imprudently displayed their zeal in the cause of freedom; and after the successors of Probus had withdrawn their countenance from the republican party, the senators were unable to disguise their impotent resentment. As the sovereign of Italy, Maximian was intrusted with the care of extinguishing this troublesome, rather than dangerous, spirit, and the task was perfectly suited to his cruel temper. The most illustrious members of the senate, whom Diocletian always affected to esteem, were involved, by his colleague, in the accusation of imaginary plots; and the possession of an elegant villa, or a well-cultivated estate, was interpreted as a convincing evidence of guilt⁹³. The camp of the Prætorians, which had so long oppressed, began to protect, the majesty of Rome; and as those haughty troops were conscious of the decline of their power, they were naturally disposed to unite their strength with the authority of the senate. By the prudent measures of Diocletian, the numbers of the Prætorians were insensibly reduced, their privileges abolished⁹⁴, and their place supplied by two faithful legions of Illyricum, who, under the new titles of Jovians and Herculians, were appointed to perform the service of the Imperial

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New bodies
of guards,
Jovians
and Her-
culians.

⁹³ Lactantius accuses Maximian of destroying *fictis criminationibus lumina senatûs* (De M. P. c. 8.). Aurelius Victor speaks very doubtfully of the faith of Diocletian towards his friends.

⁹⁴ *Truncatæ vires urbis, imminuto prætoriarum cohortium atque in armis vulgi numero.* Aurelius Victor. Lactantius attributes to Galerius the prosecution of the same plan (c. 26.).

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guards⁹⁵. But the most fatal though secret wound, which the senate received from the hands of Diocletian and Maximian, was inflicted by the inevitable operation of their absence. As long as the emperors resided at Rome, that assembly might be oppressed, but it could scarcely be neglected. The successors of Augustus exercised the power of dictating whatever laws their wisdom or caprice might suggest; but those laws were ratified by the sanction of the senate. The model of ancient freedom was preserved in its deliberations and decrees; and wise princes, who respected the prejudices of the Roman people, were in some measure obliged to assume the language and behaviour suitable to the general and first magistrate of the republic. In the armies and in the provinces, they displayed the dignity of monarchs; and when they fixed their residence at a distance from the capital, they for ever laid aside the dissimulation which Augustus had recommended to his successors. In the exercise of the legislative as well as the executive power, the sovereign advised with his ministers, instead of consulting the great council of the nation. The name of the senate was mentioned with honour till the last period of the empire; the

⁹⁵ They were old corps stationed in Illyricum; and according to the ancient establishment, they each consisted of six thousand men. They had acquired much reputation by the use of the *plumbatae*, or darts loaded with lead. Each soldier carried five of these, which he darted from a considerable distance, with great strength and dexterity. See Vegetius, i. 17.

vanity

vanity of its members was still flattered with honorary distinctions⁹⁶; but the assembly which had so long been the source, and so long the instrument of power, was respectfully suffered to sink into oblivion. The senate of Rome, losing all connection with the Imperial court and the actual constitution, was left a venerable but useless monument of antiquity on the Capitoline hill.

When the Roman princes had lost sight of the senate and of their ancient capital, they easily forgot the origin and nature of their legal power. The civil offices of consul, of proconsul, of censor, and of tribune, by the union of which it had been formed, betrayed to the people its republican extraction. Those modest titles were laid aside⁹⁷; and if they still distinguished their high station by the appellation of Emperor, or **IMPERATOR**, that word was understood in a new and more dignified sense, and no longer denoted the general of the Roman armies, but the sovereign of the Roman world. The name of Emperor, which was at first of a military nature, was associated with another of a more servile kind. The epithet of **DOMINUS**, or Lord, in its primitive signification, was expressive, not of the authority of a prince over his subjects, or

Civil magistracies
laid aside.

Imperial
dignity and
titles.

⁹⁶ See the Theodosian Code, l. vi. tit. ii. with Godefroy's commentary.

⁹⁷ See the 12th dissertation in Spanheim's excellent work *de Usu Numismatum*. From medals, inscriptions, and historians, he examines every title separately, and traces it from Augustus to the moment of its disappearing.

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of a commander over his soldiers, but of the despotic power of a master over his domestic slaves⁹⁸. Viewing it in that odious light, it had been rejected with abhorrence by the first Cæsars. Their resistance insensibly became more feeble, and the name less odious; till at length the style of *our Lord and Emperor*, was not only bestowed by flattery, but was regularly admitted into the laws and public monuments. Such lofty epithets were sufficient to elate and satisfy the most excessive vanity; and if the successors of Diocletian still declined the title of King, it seems to have been the effect not so much of their moderation as of their delicacy. Wherever the Latin tongue was in use (and it was the language of government throughout the empire), the Imperial title, as it was peculiar to themselves, conveyed a more respectable idea than the name of King, which they must have shared with an hundred barbarian chieftains; or which, at the best, they could derive only from Romulus or from Tarquin. But the sentiments of the East were very different from those of the West. From the earliest period of history, the sovereigns of Asia had been celebrated in the Greek language by the title of *BASILEUS*, or King; and since it was considered as the first distinction

⁹⁸ Pliny (in Panegy. c. 3. 55, &c.) speaks of *Dominus* with execration, as synonymous to Tyrant, and opposite to Prince. And the same Pliny regularly gives that title (in the tenth book of the epistles) to his friend rather than master, the virtuous Trajan. This strange contradiction puzzles the commentators, who think, and the translators, who can write.

among

among men, it was soon employed by the servile provincials of the East, in their humble addresses to the Roman throne⁹⁹. Even the attributes, or at least the titles of the DIVINITY, were usurped by Diocletian and Maximian, who transmitted them to a succession of Christian emperors¹⁰⁰. Such extravagant compliments, however, soon lose their impiety by losing their meaning; and when the ear is once accustomed to the sound, they are heard with indifference as vague though excessive professions of respect.

From the time of Augustus to that of Diocletian, the Roman princes conversing in a familiar manner among their fellow-citizens, were saluted only with the same respect that was usually paid to senators and magistrates. Their principal distinction was the Imperial or military robe of purple; whilst the senatorial garment was marked by a broad, and the equestrian by a narrow, band or stripe of the same honourable colour. The pride, or rather the policy, of Diocletian, engaged that artful prince to introduce the stately magnificence of the court of Persia¹⁰¹. He ventured to assume the diadem, an ornament detested by the Romans as the odious ensign of royalty, and the use of which had been considered

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Diocletian assumes the diadem, and introduces the Persian ceremonial.

⁹⁹ Synesius de Regno, Edit. Petav. p. 15. I am indebted for this quotation to the Abbé de la Bletterie.

¹⁰⁰ See Vendale de Consécratione, p. 354, &c. It was customary for the emperors to mention (in the preamble of laws) their *numen*, *sacred majesty*, *divine oracles*, &c. According to Tillemont, Gregory of Nazianzen complains most bitterly of the profanation, especially when it was practised by an Arian emperor.

¹⁰¹ See Spanheim de Usu Numismat. Dissertat. xii.

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as the most desperate act of the madness of Caligula. It was no more than a broad white fillet set with pearls, which encircled the emperor's head. The sumptuous robes of Diocletian and his successors were of silk and gold; and it is remarked with indignation, that even their shoes were studded with the most precious gems. The access to their sacred person was every day rendered more difficult, by the institution of new forms and ceremonies. The avenues of the palace were strictly guarded by the various *schools*, as they began to be called, of domestic officers. The interior apartments were intrusted to the jealous vigilance of the eunuchs; the increase of whose numbers and influence was the most infallible symptom of the progress of despotism. When a subject was at length admitted to the Imperial presence, he was obliged, whatever might be his rank, to fall prostrate on the ground, and to adore, according to the eastern fashion, the divinity of his lord and master¹⁰². Diocletian was a man of sense, who, in the course of private as well as public life, had formed a just estimate both of himself and of mankind: nor is it easy to conceive, that in substituting the manners of Persia to those of Rome, he was seriously actuated by so mean a principle as that of vanity. He flattered himself, that an ostentation of splendour and luxury would subdue the imagination of the multitude; that the

¹⁰² Aurelius Victor. Eutropius, ix. 26. It appears by the Panegyrics, that the Romans were soon reconciled to the name and ceremony of adoration.

monarch

monarch would be less exposed to the rude licence of the people and the soldiers, as his person was secluded from the public view; and that habits of submission would insensibly be productive of sentiments of veneration. Like the modesty affected by Augustus, the state maintained by Diocletian was a theatrical representation; but it must be confessed, that of the two comedies, the former was of a much more liberal and manly character than the latter. It was the aim of the one to disguise, and the object of the other to display, the unbounded power which the emperors possessed over the Roman world.

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Ostentation was the first principle of the new system instituted by Diocletian. The second was division. He divided the empire, the provinces, and every branch of the civil as well as military administration. He multiplied the wheels of the machine of government, and rendered its operations less rapid but more secure. Whatever advantages and whatever defects might attend these innovations, they must be ascribed in a very great degree to the first inventor; but as the new frame of policy was gradually improved and completed by succeeding princes, it will be more satisfactory to delay the consideration of it till the season of its full maturity and perfection¹⁰¹. Reserving, therefore, for the reign of Constan-

New form of administration, two Augusti, and two Cæsars.

¹⁰¹ The innovations introduced by Diocletian, are chiefly deduced, first, from some very strong passages in Lactantius; and, secondly, from the new and various offices, which, in the Theodosian code, appear already established in the beginning of the reign of Constantine.

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time a more exact picture of the new empire, we shall content ourselves with describing the principal and decisive outline, as it was traced by the hand of Diocletian. He had associated three colleagues in the exercise of the supreme power ; and as he was convinced that the abilities of a single man were inadequate to the public defence, he considered the joint administration of four princes not as a temporary expedient, but as a fundamental law of the constitution. It was his intention, that the two elder princes should be distinguished by the use of the diadem, and the title of *Augusti*: that, as affection or esteem might direct their choice, they should regularly call to their assistance two subordinate colleagues ; and that the *Cæsars*, rising in their turn to the first rank, should supply an uninterrupted succession of emperors. The empire was divided into four parts. The East and Italy were the most honourable, the Danube and the Rhine the most laborious stations. The former claimed the presence of the *Augusti*, the latter were intrusted to the administration of the *Cæsars*. The strength of the legions was in the hands of the four partners of sovereignty, and the despair of successively, vanquishing four formidable rivals, might intimidate the ambition of an aspiring general. In their civil government, the emperors were supposed to exercise the undivided power of the monarch, and their edicts, inscribed with their joint names, were received in all the provinces, as promulgated by their mutual councils and authority. Notwithstanding these precautions, the

the political union of the Roman world was gradually dissolved, and a principle of division was introduced, which, in the course of a few years, occasioned the perpetual separation of the eastern and western empires.

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The system of Diocletian was accompanied with another very material disadvantage, which cannot even at present be totally overlooked; a more expensive establishment, and consequently an increase of taxes, and the oppression of the people. Instead of a modest family of slaves and freedmen, such as had contented the simple greatness of Augustus and Trajan, three or four magnificent courts were established in the various parts of the empire, and as many Roman *kings* contended with each other and with the Persian monarch for the vain superiority of pomp and luxury. The number of ministers, of magistrates, of officers, and of servants, who filled the different departments of the state, was multiplied beyond the example of former times; and (if we may borrow the warm expression of a contemporary), “when the proportion of those who received, exceeded the proportion of those who contributed, the provinces were oppressed by the weight of tributes¹⁰⁴.” From this period to the extinction of the empire, it would be easy to deduce an uninterrupted series of clamours and complaints. According to his religion and situation, each writer chuses either Diocletian, or Constantine, or Valens, or Theodosius, for the

Increase of
taxes.

¹⁰⁴ Lactant. de M. P. c. 7.

object

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object of his invectives; but they unanimously agree in representing the burden of the public impositions, and particularly the land-tax and capitation, as the intolerable and increasing grievance of their own times. From such a concurrence, an impartial historian, who is obliged to extract truth from satire, as well as from panegyric, will be inclined to divide the blame among the princes whom they accuse, and to ascribe their exactions much less to their personal vices, than to the uniform system of their administration. The emperor Diocletian was indeed the author of that system; but during his reign, the growing evil was confined within the bounds of modesty and discretion; and he deserves the reproach of establishing pernicious precedents, rather than of exercising actual oppression¹⁰⁵. It may be added, that his revenues were managed with prudent œconomy; and that after all the current expences were discharged, there still remained in the Imperial treasury an ample provision either for judicious liberality or for any emergency of the state.

Abdication
of Diocle-
tian and
Maximian.

It was in the twenty-first year of his reign that Diocletian executed his memorable resolution of abdicating the empire; an action more naturally to have been expected from the elder or the younger Antoninus, than from a prince who had never practised the lessons of philosophy either in the attainment or in the use of supreme power.

¹⁰⁵ Indicta lex nova quæ sane illorum temporum modestiâ tolerabilis, in perniciem processit. Aurel. Victor, who has treated the character of Diocletian with good sense, though in bad Latin.

Diocle-

Diocletian acquired the glory of giving to the world the first example of a resignation¹⁰⁶, which has not been very frequently imitated by succeeding monarchs. The parallel of Charles the Fifth, however, will naturally offer itself to our mind, not only since the eloquence of a modern historian has rendered that name so familiar to an English reader, but from the very striking resemblance between the characters of the two emperors, whose political abilities were superior to their military genius, and whose specious virtues were much less the effect of nature than of art. The abdication of Charles appears to have been hastened by the vicissitudes of fortune; and the disappointment of his favourite schemes urged him to relinquish a power which he found inadequate to his ambition. But the reign of Diocletian had flowed with a tide of uninterrupted success; nor was it till after he had vanquished all his enemies, and accomplished all his designs, that he seems to have entertained any serious thoughts of resigning the empire. Neither Charles nor Diocletian were arrived at a very advanced period of life; since the one was only fifty-five, and the other was no more than fifty-nine years of age; but the active life of those princes, their wars and journies, the cares of royalty, and their application to business, had

Resem-
blance to
Charles the
Fifth.

¹⁰⁶ Solus omnium, post conditum Romanum Imperium, qui ex tanto fastigio sponte ad privatæ vitæ statum civilitatemque remearet. Eutrop. ix. 28.

already

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A. D. 304.
Long illness of
Diocletian.

already impaired their constitution, and brought on the infirmities of a premature old age¹⁰⁷.

Notwithstanding the severity of a very cold and rainy winter, Diocletian left Italy soon after the ceremony of his triumph, and began his progress towards the East round the circuit of the Illyrian provinces. From the inclemency of the weather, and the fatigue of the journey, he soon contracted a slow illness; and though he made easy marches, and was generally carried in a close litter, his disorder, before he arrived at Nicomedia, about the end of the summer, was become very serious and alarming. During the whole winter he was confined to his palace: his danger inspired a general and unaffected concern; but the people could only judge of the various alterations of his health, from the joy or consternation which they discovered in the countenances and behaviour of his attendants. The rumour of his death was for some time universally believed, and it was supposed to be concealed, with a view to prevent the troubles that might have happened during the absence of the Cæsar Galerius. At length, however, on the first of March, Diocletian once more appeared in public, but so pale and emaciated, that he could scarcely have been recognised by those to whom his person was the most familiar. It was time to put an end to the painful struggle, which he had

His prudence.

¹⁰⁷ The particulars of the journey and illness are taken from Lactantius (c. 17.), who may *sometimes* be admitted as an evidence of public facts, though very seldom of private anecdotes.

sustained

sustained during more than a year, between the care of his health and that of his dignity. The former required indulgence and relaxation, the latter compelled him to direct, from the bed of sickness, the administration of a great empire. He resolved to pass the remainder of his days in honourable repose, to place his glory beyond the reach of fortune, and to relinquish the theatre of the world to his younger and more active associates ¹⁰⁸.

The ceremony of his abdication was performed in a spacious plain, about three miles from Nicomedia. The emperor ascended a lofty throne, and in a speech, full of reason and dignity, declared his intention, both to the people, and to the soldiers who were assembled on this extraordinary occasion. As soon as he had divested himself of the purple, he withdrew from the gazing multitude; and traversing the city in a covered chariot, proceeded, without delay, to the favourite retirement which he had chosen in his native country of Dalmatia. On the same day, which was the first of May ¹⁰⁹, Maximian, as it had been previously concerted, made his resignation of the Imperial dignity at Milan.

A. D. 305.
May 1.

Compliance of
Maximian.

¹⁰⁸ Aurelius Victor ascribes the abdication, which had been so variously accounted for, to two causes. 1st, Diocletian's contempt of ambition; and 2dly, His apprehension of impending troubles. One of the panegyrists (vi. 9.) mentions the age and infirmities of Diocletian, as a very natural reason for his retirement.

¹⁰⁹ The difficulties as well as mistakes attending the dates both of the year and of the day of Diocletian's abdication, are perfectly cleared up by Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 525. Note 19, and by Pagi ad annum.

Even

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Even in the splendour of the Roman triumph, Diocletian had meditated his design of abdicating the government. As he wished to secure the obedience of Maximian, he exacted from him, either a general assurance that he would submit his actions to the authority of his benefactor, or a particular promise that he would descend from the throne, whenever he should receive the advice and the example. This engagement, though it was confirmed by the solemnity of an oath before the altar of the Capitoline Jupiter¹¹⁰, would have proved a feeble restraint on the fierce temper of Maximian, whose passion was the love of power, and who neither desired present tranquillity nor future reputation. But he yielded, however reluctantly, to the ascendant which his wiser colleague had acquired over him, and retired, immediately after his abdication, to a villa in Lucania, where it was almost impossible that such an impatient spirit could find any lasting tranquillity.

Retirement
of Diocle-
tian at Sa-
lona.

Diocletian, who, from a servile origin, had raised himself to the throne, passed the nine last years of his life in a private condition. Reason had dictated, and content seems to have accompanied, his retreat, in which he enjoyed for a long time the respect of those princes to whom he had resigned the possession of the world¹¹¹.

It

¹¹⁰ See Panegy. Veter. vi. 9. The oration was pronounced after Maximian had re-assumed the purple.

¹¹¹ Eumenius pays him a very fine compliment: "At enim divinum illum virum, qui primus imperium et participavit et posuit, consilii et
" facti

It is seldom that minds, long exercised in business, have formed any habits of conversing with themselves, and in the loss of power they principally regret the want of occupation. The amusements of letters and of devotion, which afford so many resources in solitude, were incapable of fixing the attention of Diocletian; but he had preserved, or at least he soon recovered, a taste for the most innocent as well as natural pleasures, and his leisure hours were sufficiently employed in building, planting, and gardening. His answer to Maximian is deservedly celebrated. He was solicited by that restless old man to re-assume the reins of government, and the Imperial purple. He rejected the temptation with a smile of pity, calmly observing, that if he could shew Maximian the cabbages which he had planted with his own hands at Salona, he should no longer be urged to relinquish the enjoyment of happiness for the pursuit of power¹¹². In his conversations with his friends, he frequently acknowledged, that of all arts, the most difficult was the art of reigning; and he expressed himself on that favourite topic with a degree of warmth which could be the result only of experience. "How often," was he accustomed to say, "is it the interest of four or five ministers to combine together to deceive their sove-

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His philo-
sophy,

"facti sui non poenitet; nec amisisse se putat quod sponte transcripsit
"Felix beatusque vere quem vestra, tantorum principum, colunt obsequia privatum." Panegy. Vet. vii. 15.

¹¹² We are obliged to the younger Victor for this celebrated bon mot. Eutropius mentions the thing in a more general manner.

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“ reign! Secluded from mankind by his exalted
 “ dignity, the truth is concealed from his know-
 “ ledge; he can see only with their eyes, he
 “ hears nothing but their misrepresentations.
 “ He confers the most important offices upon
 “ vice and weakness, and disgraces the most
 “ virtuous and deserving among his subjects.
 “ By such infamous arts,” added Diocletian, “ the
 “ best and wisest princes are sold to the venal
 “ corruption of their courtiers”¹¹³.” A just
 estimate of greatness, and the assurance of im-
 mortal fame, improve our relish for the plea-
 sures of retirement; but the Roman emperor
 had filled too important a character in the world,
 to enjoy without alloy the comforts and security
 of a private condition. It was impossible that
 he could remain ignorant of the troubles which
 afflicted the empire after his abdication. It was
 impossible that he could be indifferent to their
 consequences. Fear, sorrow, and discontent,
 sometimes pursued him into the solitude of Sa-
 lona. His tenderness, or at least his pride, was
 deeply wounded by the misfortunes of his wife
 and daughter; and the last moments of Diocle-
 tian were embittered by some affronts, which
 Licinius and Constantine might have spared the
 father of so many emperors, and the first author
 of their own fortune. A report, though of a very
 doubtful nature, has reached our times, that he
 and death,
 A. D. 313.

¹¹³ Hist. August. p. 223, 224. Vopiscus had learned this con-
 versation from his father.

prudently

prudently withdrew himself from their power by a voluntary death ¹¹⁴.

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Description of Salona and the adjacent country.

Before we dismiss the consideration of the life and character of Diocletian, we may, for a moment, direct our view to the place of his retirement. Salona, a principal city of his native province of Dalmatia, was near two hundred Roman miles (according to the measurement of the public highways, from Aquileia and the confines of Italy, and about two hundred and seventy from Sirmium, the usual residence of the emperors whenever they visited the Illyrian frontier ¹¹⁵. A miserable village still preserves the name of Salona; but so late as the sixteenth century, the remains of a theatre, and a confused prospect of broken arches and marble columns, continued to attest its ancient splendour ¹¹⁶. About six or seven miles from the city, Diocletian constructed a magnificent palace, and we may infer, from the greatness of the work, how long he had meditated his design of abdicating the empire. The choice of a spot which united all that could contribute either to health or to luxury, did not

¹¹⁴ The younger Victor slightly mentions the report. But as Diocletian had disoblged a powerful and successful party, his memory has been loaded with every crime and misfortune. It has been affirmed, that he died raving mad, that he was condemned as a criminal by the Roman senate, &c.

¹¹⁵ See the Itiner. p. 269. 272. Edit. Wessel.

¹¹⁶ The Abate Fortis, in his *Viaggio in Dalmazia*, p. 43. (printed at Venice in the year 1774, in two small volumes in quarto) quotes a MS. account of the antiquities of Salona, composed by Giambattista Guistiniani about the middle of the xvth century.

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require the partiality of a native. " The soil
" was dry and fertile, the air is pure and whole-
" some, and though extremely hot during the
" summer months, this country seldom feels
" those sultry and noxious winds, to which the
" coasts of Istria and some parts of Italy are ex-
" posed. The views from the palace are no less
" beautiful than the soil and climate were in-
" viting. Towards the west lies the fertile
" shore that stretches along the Hadriatic, in
" which a number of small islands are scattered
" in such a manner, as to give this part of the
" sea the appearance of a great lake. On the
" north side lies the bay, which led to the ancient
" city of Salona; and the country beyond it,
" appearing in sight, forms a proper contrast to
" that more extensive prospect of water, which
" the Hadriatic presents both to the south and to
" the east. Towards the north, the view is ter-
" minated by high and irregular mountains,
" situated at a proper distance, and, in many
" places, covered with villages, woods, and vine-
" yards ¹¹⁷."

¹¹⁷ Adams's *Antiquities of Diocletian's palace at Spalatro*, p. 6. We may add a circumstance or two from the Abate Fortis: the little stream of the Hyader, mentioned by Lucan, produces most excellent trout, which a sagacious writer, perhaps a monk, supposes to have been one of the principal reasons that determined Diocletian in the choice of his retirement. Fortis, p. 45. The same author (p. 38.) observes, that a taste for agriculture is reviving at Spalatro; and that an experimental farm has lately been established near the city, by a society of gentlemen.

Though

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Of Diocle-
tian's pa-
lace.

Though Constantine, from a very obvious prejudice, affects to mention the palace of Diocletian with contempt¹¹⁸, yet one of their successors, who could only see it in a neglected and mutilated state, celebrates its magnificence in terms of the highest admiration¹¹⁹. It covered an extent of ground consisting of between nine and ten English acres. The form was quadrangular, flanked with sixteen towers. Two of the sides were near six hundred, and the other two near seven hundred feet in length. The whole was constructed of a beautiful free-stone, extracted from the neighbouring quarries of Trau, or Tragutium, and very little inferior to marble itself. Four streets, intersecting each other at right angles, divided the several parts of this great edifice, and the approach to the principal apartment was from a very stately entrance, which is still denominated the Golden Gate. The approach was terminated by a *peristylum* of granite columns, on one side of which we discover the square temple of Æsculapius, on the other the octagon temple of Jupiter. The latter of those deities Diocletian revered as the patron of his fortunes, the former as the protector of his health. By comparing the present remains with the precepts of Vitruvius, the several parts of the building, the baths, bedchamber, the *atrium*, the *basilica*, and the Cyzicene, Corinthian, and Egyp-

¹¹⁸ Constantin. Orat. ad Cœtum Sanct. c. 25. In this sermon, the emperor, or the bishop who composed it for him, affects to relate the miserable end of all the persecutors of the church.

¹¹⁹ Constantin. Porphy. de Statu Imper. p. 36.

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tian halls have been described with some degree of precision, or at least of probability. Their forms were various, their proportions just, but they were all attended with two imperfections, very repugnant to our modern notions of taste and conveniency. These stately rooms had neither windows nor chimnies. They were lighted from the top (for the building seems to have consisted of no more than one story), and they received their heat by the help of pipes that were conveyed along the walls. The range of principal apartments was protected towards the south-west, by a portico of five hundred and seventeen feet long, which must have formed a very noble and delightful walk, when the beauties of painting and sculpture were added to those of the prospect.

Had this magnificent edifice remained in a solitary country, it would have been exposed to the ravages of time; but it might, perhaps, have escaped the rapacious industry of man. The village of Aspalathus¹²⁰, and, long afterwards, the provincial town of Spalatro, had grown out of its ruins. The golden gate now opens into the market-place. St. John the Baptist has usurped the honours of Æsculapius; and the temple of Jupiter, under the protection of the Virgin, is converted into the cathedral church. For this account of Diocletian's palace, we are principally indebted to an ingenious artist of our own time and country, whom a very liberal curiosity car-

¹²⁰ D'Anville, *Géographie Ancienne*, tom. i. p. 162.

ried into the heart of Dalmatia¹²¹. But there is room to suspect, that the elegance of his designs and engraving has somewhat flattered the objects which it was their purpose to represent. We are informed by a more recent and very judicious traveller, that the awful ruins of Spalatro are not less expressive of the decline of the arts, than of the greatness of the Roman empire in the time of Diocletian¹²². If such was indeed the state of architecture, we must naturally believe that painting and sculpture had experienced a still more sensible decay. The practice of architecture is directed by a few general and even mechanical rules. But sculpture, and, above all, painting, propose to themselves the imitation not only of the forms of nature, but of the characters and passions of the human soul. In those sublime arts, the dexterity of the hand is of little avail, unless it is animated by fancy, and guided by the most correct taste and observation.

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Decline of
the arts.

It is almost unnecessary to remark, that the civil distractions of the empire, the licence of the foldiers, the inroads of the barbarians, and

Of letters,

¹²¹ Messieurs Adam and Clerisseau, attended by two draughtsmen, visited Spalatro in the month of July 1757. The magnificent work which their journey produced, was published in London seven years afterwards.

¹²² I shall quote the words of the Abate Fortis. "E' bastevol-
mente nota agli amatori dell' Architettura, e dell' Antichità,
l' opera del Signor ADAMS, che a donato molto a que' superbi ver-
tigi coll' abituale eleganza del suo toccalapis e del bulino. In ge-
nerale la rozzezza del scalpello, e'l cattivo gusto del secolo vi gareg-
giano colla magnificenza del fabricato." See Viaggio in Dalmazia, p. 40.

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the progress of despotism, had proved very unfavourable to genius, and even to learning. The succession of Illyrian princes restored the empire, without restoring the sciences. Their military education was not calculated to inspire them with the love of letters; and even the mind of Diocletian, however active and capacious in business, was totally uninformed by study or speculation. The professions of law and physic are of such common use and certain profit, that they will always secure a sufficient number of practitioners, endowed with a reasonable degree of abilities and knowledge; but it does not appear that the students in those two faculties appeal to any celebrated masters who have flourished within that period. The voice of poetry was silent. History was reduced to dry and confused abridgments, alike destitute of amusement and instruction. A languid and affected eloquence was still retained in the pay and service of the emperors, who encouraged not any arts except those which contributed to the gratification of their pride, or the defence of their power ¹²³.

The new
Platonists.

The declining age of learning and of mankind is marked, however, by the rise and rapid progress of the new Platonists. The school of

¹²³ The orator Eumenius was secretary to the emperors Maximian and Constantius, and Professor of Rhetoric in the college of Autun. His salary was six hundred thousand sesterces, which, according to the lowest computation of that age, must have exceeded three thousand pounds a year. He generously requested the permission of employing it in rebuilding the college. See his Oration *De restaurandis scholis*; which, though not exempt from vanity, may atone for his panegyrics.

Alex.

Alexandria silenced those of Athens; and the ancient sects inrolled themselves under the banners of the more fashionable teachers, who recommended their system by the novelty of their method, and the austerity of their manners. Several of these masters, Ammonius, Plotinus, Amelius, and Porphyry¹²⁴, were men of profound thought, and intense application; but by mistaking the true object of philosophy, their labours contributed much less to improve, than to corrupt the human understanding. The knowledge that is suited to our situation and powers, the whole compass of moral, natural, and mathematical science, was neglected by the new Platonists; while they exhausted their strength in the verbal disputes of metaphysics, attempted to explore the secrets of the invisible world, and studied to reconcile Aristotle with Plato, on subjects, of which both these philosophers were as ignorant as the rest of mankind. Consuming their reason in these deep but unsubstantial meditations, their minds were exposed to illusions of fancy. They flattered themselves that they possessed the secret of disengaging the soul from its corporeal prison; claimed a familiar intercourse with dæmons and spirits; and by a very singular revolution, converted the study of philosophy into that of magic. The ancient sages

¹²⁴ Porphyry died about the time of Diocletian's abdication. The life of his master Plotinus, which he composed, will give us the most complete idea of the genius of the sect, and the manners of its professors. This very curious piece is inserted in Fabricius, *Bibliotheca Græca*, tom. iv. p. 88—148.

had derided the popular superstition; after disguising its extravagance by the thin pretence of allegory, the disciples of Plotinus and Porphyry became its most zealous defenders. As they agreed with the Christians in a few mysterious points of faith, they attacked the remainder of their theological system with all the fury of civil war. The new Platonists would scarcely deserve a place in the history of science, but in that of the church the mention of them will very frequently occur.

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Troubles after the Abdication of Diocletian.—Death of Constantius.—Elevation of Constantine and Maxentius.—Six Emperors at the same Time.—Death of Maximian and Galerius.—Victories of Constantine over Maxentius and Licinius.—Reunion of the Empire under the Authority of Constantine.

THE balance of power established by Diocletian subsisted no longer than while it was sustained by the firm and dexterous hand of the founder. It required such a fortunate mixture of different tempers and abilities, as could scarcely be found or even expected a second time; two emperors without jealousy, two Cæsars without ambition, and the same general interest invariably pursued by four independent princes. The abdication of Diocletian and Maximian was succeeded by eighteen years of discord and confusion. The empire was afflicted by five civil wars; and the remainder of the time was not so much a state of tranquillity as a suspension of arms between several hostile monarchs, who, viewing each other with an eye of fear and hatred, strove to increase their respective forces at the expence of their subjects.

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XIV.

Period of
civil wars
and confu-
sion.

A. D. 305
—323.

As soon as Diocletian and Maximian had resigned the purple, their station, according to the rules of the new constitution, was filled by the

two

Character
and situa-
tion of
Constan-
tius.

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two Cæsars, Constantius and Galerius, who immediately assumed the title of Augustus¹. The honours of seniority and precedence were allowed to the former of those princes, and he continued, under a new appellation, to administer his ancient department of Gaul, Spain, and Britain. The government of those ample provinces was sufficient to exercise his talents, and to satisfy his ambition. Clemency, temperance, and moderation, distinguished the amiable character of Constantius, and his fortunate subjects had frequently occasion to compare the virtues of their sovereign with the passions of Maximian, and even with the arts of Diocletian². Instead of imitating their eastern pride and magnificence, Constantius preserved the modesty of a Roman prince. He declared, with unaffected sincerity, that his most valued treasure was in the hearts of his people, and that, whenever the dignity of the throne, or the danger of the state, required any extraordinary supply, he could depend with confidence on their gratitude and liberality³. The provin-

¹ M. de Montesquieu (*Considerations sur la Grandeur et la Décadence des Romains*, c. 17.) supposes, on the authority of Orosius and Eusebius, that, on this occasion, the empire, for the first time, was really divided into two parts. It is difficult, however, to discover in what respect the plan of Galerius differed from that of Diocletian.

² Hic non modo amabilis, sed etiam venerabilis Gallis fuit; precipue quod Diocletiani suspectam prudentiam, ex Maximiani sanguinariam violentiam imperio ejus evalerant. Eutrop. Breviar. x. 1.

³ Divitiis Provincialium (mel. *provinciarum*) ac privatorum studens, fisci commoda non admodum affectans; ducentque melius publicas
opea

provincials of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, sensible of his worth, and of their own happiness, reflected with anxiety on the declining health of the emperor Constantius, and the tender age of his numerous family, the issue of his second marriage with the daughter of Maximian.

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The stern temper of Galerius was cast in a very different mould; and while he commanded the esteem of his subjects, he seldom condescended to solicit their affections. His fame in arms, and above all, the success of the Persian war, had elated his haughty mind, which was naturally impatient of a superior, or even of an equal. If it were possible to rely on the partial testimony of an injudicious writer, we might ascribe the abdication of Diocletian to the menaces of Galerius, and relate the particulars of a *private* conversation between the two princes, in which the former discovered as much pusillanimity as the latter displayed ingratitude and arrogance*. But these obscure anecdotes are sufficiently refuted by an impartial view of the character and conduct of Diocletian. Whatever might otherwise have been his intentions, if he had apprehended any

Of Gale-
rius.

opes a privatis haberi, quam intra unum claustrum reservari. Id. ibid. He carried this maxim so far, that whenever he gave an entertainment, he was obliged to borrow a service of plate.

* Lactantius de Mort. Persecutor. c. 18. Were the particulars of this conference more consistent with truth and decency, we might still ask, how they came to the knowledge of an obdurate rhetorician? But there are many historians who put us in mind of the admirable saying of the great Condé to cardinal de Retz; "Ces coquins nous font parler et agir, comme ils auroient fait eux-mêmes à notre place."

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danger from the violence of Galerius, his good sense would have instructed him to prevent the ignominious contest; and as he had held the sceptre with glory, he would have resigned it without disgrace.

The two
Cæsars, Se-
verus and
Maximin.

After the elevation of Constantius and Galerius to the rank of *Augusti*, two new *Cæsars* were required to supply their place, and to complete the system of the Imperial government. Diocletian was sincerely desirous of withdrawing himself from the world; he considered Galerius, who had married his daughter, as the firmest support of his family and of the empire; and he consented, without reluctance, that his successor should assume the merit as well as the envy of the important nomination. It was fixed without consulting the interest or inclination of the princes of the West. Each of them had a son who was arrived at the age of manhood, and who might have been deemed the most natural candidates for the vacant honour. But the impotent resentment of Maximian was no longer to be dreaded; and the moderate Constantius, though he might despise the dangers, was humanely apprehensive of the calamities of civil war. The two persons whom Galerius promoted to the rank of Cæsar, were much better suited to serve the views of his ambition; and their principal recommendation seems to have consisted in the want of merit or personal consequence. The first of these was Daza, or, as he was afterwards called, Maximin, whose mother was the sister of Galerius. The
unexpe-

unexperienced youth still betrayed by his manners and language his rustic education, when, to his own astonishment as well as that of the world, he was invested by Diocletian with the purple, exalted to the dignity of Cæsar, and intrusted with the sovereign command of Egypt and Syria⁵. At the same time, Severus, a faithful servant, addicted to pleasure, but not incapable of business, was sent to Milan, to receive from the reluctant hands of Maximian the Cæsarean ornaments, and the possession of Italy and Africa⁶. According to the forms of the constitution, Severus acknowledged the supremacy of the western emperor; but he was absolutely devoted to the commands of his benefactor Galerius, who, reserving to himself the intermediate countries from the confines of Italy to those of Syria, firmly established his power over three-fourths of the monarchy. In the full confidence, that the approaching death of Constantius would leave him sole master of the Roman world, we are assured that he had arranged in his mind a long succession of future princes, and that he meditated his own retreat from public life, after he should have accomplished a glorious reign of about twenty years⁷.

⁵ *Sublatus nuper a pecoribus et filvis* (says Lactantius de M. P. c. 19.) statim *Scutarius*, continuo *Protektor*, mox *Tribunus*, postmodum *Cæsar*, accepit *Orientem*. Aurelius Victor is too liberal in giving him the whole portion of Diocletian.

⁶ His diligence and fidelity are acknowledged even by Lactantius, de M. P. c. 18.

⁷ These schemes, however, rest only on the very doubtful authority of Lactantius, de M. P. c. 20.

But

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XIV.

Aspiration
of Galerius
disappointed
by two
revolu-
tions.

Birth, edu-
cation, and
escape of
Constantine.
A.D. 274.

But within less than eighteen months, two unexpected revolutions overturned the ambitious schemes of Galerius. The hopes of uniting the western provinces to his empire, were disappointed by the elevation of Constantine, whilst Italy and Africa were lost by the successful revolt of Maxentius.

I. The fame of Constantine has rendered posterity attentive to the most minute circumstances of his life and actions. The place of his birth, as well as the condition of his mother Helena, have been the subject not only of literary but of national disputes. Notwithstanding the recent tradition, which assigns for her father, a British king, we are obliged to confess, that Helena was the daughter of an innkeeper⁸; but at the same time we may defend the legality of her marriage, against those who have represented her as the concubine of Constantius⁹. The great Constantine was most probably born at Naissus, in Da-

⁸ This tradition, unknown to the contemporaries of Constantine, was invented in the darkness of monasteries, was embellished by Jeffrey of Monmouth, and the writers of the xiith century, has been defended by our antiquarians of the last age, and is seriously related in the ponderous history of England, compiled by Mr. Carte (vol. i. p. 147.). He transports, however, the kingdom of Coil, the imaginary father of Helena, from Essex to the wall of Antoninus.

⁹ Eutropius (x. 2.) expresses, in a few words, the real truth, and the occasion of the error, "*ex obscuriori matrimonio ejus filius.*" Zosimus (l. ii. p. 78.) eagerly seized the most unfavourable report, and is followed by Orosius (vii. 25.), whose authority is oddly enough overlooked by the indefatigable but partial Tillemont. By insisting on the divorce of Helena, Diocletian acknowledged her marriage.

cia ;

cia¹⁰; and it is not surprising, that in a family and province distinguished only by the profession of arms, the youth should discover very little inclination to improve his mind by the acquisition of knowledge". He was about eighteen years of age when his father was promoted to the rank of Cæsar; but that fortunate event was attended with his mother's divorce; and the splendour of an Imperial alliance reduced the son of Helena to a state of disgrace and humiliation. Instead of following Constantius in the West, he remained in the service of Diocletian, signalized his valour in the wars of Egypt and Persia, and

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A.D. 292.

¹⁰ There are three opinions with regard to the place of Constantine's birth. 1. Our English antiquarians were used to dwell with rapture on the words of his panegyrist; "*Britannias illic oriundo nobiles fecisti.*" But this celebrated passage may be referred with as much propriety to the accession as to the nativity of Constantine. 2. Some of the modern Greeks have ascribed the honour of his birth to Drepanum, a town on the gulf of Nicomedia (Cellarius, tom. ii. p. 174.), which Constantine dignified with the name of Helenopolis, and Asianian adorned with many splendid buildings (Procop. de *Ædificiis*, v. 2.). It is indeed probable enough, that Helena's father kept an inn at Drepanum; and that Constantius might lodge there when he returned from a Persian embassy in the reign of Aurelian. But in the wandering life of a soldier, the place of his marriage, and the places where his children are born, have very little connection with each other. 3. The claim of Naissus is supported by the anonymous writer, published at the end of Ammianus, p. 710. and who in general copied very good materials: and it is confirmed by Julius Firmicius (de *Astrologiâ*, l. i. c. 4.), who flourished under the reign of Constantine himself. Some objections have been raised against the integrity of the text, and the application of the passage of Firmicius; but the former is established by the best MSS. and the latter is very ably defended by Lipsius de *Magnitudine Romana*, l. iv. c. 11. et Supplement.

¹¹ *Literis minus instructus.* Anonym. ad Ammian. p. 710.

gradually

gradually rose to the honourable station of a tribune of the first order. The figure of Constantine was tall and majestic; he was dextrous in all his exercises, intrepid in war, affable in peace; in his whole conduct, the active spirit of youth was tempered by habitual prudence; and while his mind was engrossed by ambition, he appeared cold and insensible to the allurements of pleasure. The favour of the people and soldiers, who had named him as a worthy candidate for the rank of Cæsar, served only to exasperate the jealousy of Galerius; and though prudence might restrain him from exercising any open violence, an absolute monarch is seldom at a loss how to execute a sure and secret revenge¹². Every hour increased the danger of Constantine, and the anxiety of his father, who, by repeated letters, expressed the warmest desire of embracing his son. For some time the policy of Galerius supplied him with delays and excuses, but it was impossible long to refuse so natural a request of his associate, without maintaining his refusal by arms. The permission of the journey was reluctantly granted, and whatever precautions the emperor might have taken to intercept a return, the consequences of which, he, with so much reason, apprehended, they were effectually disappointed by the incre-

¹² Galerius, or perhaps his own courage, exposed him to single combat with a Sarmatian (*Anonym.* p. 710.) and with a monstrous lion. See Praxagoras apud Photium, p. 63. Praxagoras, an Athenian philosopher, had written a life of Constantine, in two books, which are now lost. He was a contemporary.

dible diligence of Constantine¹³. Leaving the palace of Nicomedia in the night, he travelled post through Bithynia, Thrace, Dacia, Pannonia, Italy, and Gaul, and amidst the joyful acclamations of the people, reached the port of Boulogne, in the very moment when his father was preparing to embark for Britain¹⁴.

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The British expedition, and an easy victory over the barbarians of Caledonia, were the last exploits of the reign of Constantius. He ended his life in the Imperial palace of York, fifteen months after he had received the title of Augustus, and almost fourteen years and a half after he had been promoted to the rank of Cæsar. His death was immediately succeeded by the elevation of Constantine. The ideas of inheritance and succession are so very familiar, that the generality of mankind consider them as founded, not only in reason, but in nature itself. Our imagination readily transfers the same principles from private property to public dominion: and whenever a virtuous father leaves behind him a son whose merit seems to justify the esteem, or even the hopes, of the people, the joint influence of prejudice and of affection operates with irre-

Death of
Constantius, and
elevation
of Constantine.
A.D. 306.
July 25.

¹³ Zosimus, l. ii. p. 78, 79. Lactantius de M. P. c. 24. The former tells a very foolish story, that Constantine caused all the post-horses which he had used, to be hamstrung. Such a bloody execution, without preventing a pursuit, would have scattered suspicions, and might have stopped his journey.

¹⁴ Anonym. p. 710. Panegyr. Veter. vii. 4. But Zosimus, l. ii. p. 79. Eusebius de Vit. Constant. l. i. c. 21. and Lactantius de M. P. c. 24. suppose, with less accuracy, that he found his father on his death-bed.

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sistible weight. The flower of the western armies had followed Constantius into Britain, and the national troops were reinforced by a numerous body of Alemanni, who obeyed the orders of Crocus, one of their hereditary chieftains¹⁵. The opinion of their own importance, and the assurance that Britain, Gaul, and Spain would acquiesce in their nomination, were diligently inculcated to the legions by the adherents of Constantine. The soldiers were asked, Whether they could hesitate a moment between the honour of placing at their head the worthy son of their beloved emperor, and the ignominy of tamely expecting the arrival of some obscure stranger, on whom it might please the sovereign of Asia to bestow the armies and provinces of the West? It was insinuated to them, that gratitude and liberality held a distinguished place among the virtues of Constantine; nor did that artful prince shew himself to the troops, till they were prepared to salute him with the names of Augustus and Emperor. The throne was the object of his desires; and had he been less actuated by ambition, it was his only means of safety. He was well acquainted with the character and sentiments of Galerius, and sufficiently apprized, that if he wished to live he must determine to reign. The

¹⁵ *Cunctis qui aderant annitentibus, sed præcipue Croco (alii Eroco) Alamannorum Rege, auxilii gratiâ Constantium comitato, imperium capit. Victor Junior, c. 41.* This is perhaps the first instance of a barbarian king, who assisted the Roman arms with an independent body of his own subjects. The practice grew familiar, and at last became fatal.

decent

decent and even obstinate resistance which he chose to affect¹⁶, was contrived to justify his usurpation; nor did he yield to the acclamations of the army, till he had provided the proper materials for the letter, which he immediately dispatched to the emperor of the East. Constantine informed him of the melancholy event of his father's death, modestly asserted his natural claim to the succession, and respectfully lamented, that the affectionate violence of his troops had not permitted him to solicit the Imperial purple in the regular and constitutional manner. The first emotions of Galerius were those of surprise, disappointment, and rage; and as he could seldom restrain his passions, he loudly threatened, that he would commit to the flames both the letter and the messenger. But his resentment insensibly subsided; and when he recollected the doubtful chance of war, when he had weighed the character and strength of his adversary, he consented to embrace the honourable accommodation which the prudence of Constantine had left open to him. Without either condemning or ratifying the choice of the British army, Galerius accepted the son of his deceased colleague, as the sovereign of the provinces beyond the Alps; but he gave him only the title of Cæsar, and the fourth rank among the Roman princes, whilst he conferred the vacant place of Augustus on his favourite

He is acknowledged by Galerius, who gives him only the title of Cæsar, and that of Augustus to Severus.

¹⁶ His panegyrist Eumenius (vii. 8.) ventures to affirm, in the presence of Constantine, that he put spurs to his horse, and tried, but in vain, to escape from the hands of his soldiers.

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The brothers and
sisters of
Constantine.

Séverus. The apparent harmony of the empire was still preserved, and Constantine, who already possessed the substance, expected, without impatience, an opportunity of obtaining the honours, of supreme power ¹⁷.

The children of Constantius by his second marriage were six in number, three of either sex, and whose Imperial descent might have solicited a preference over the meaner extraction of the son of Helena. But Constantine was in the thirty-second year of his age, in the full vigour both of mind and body, at the time when the eldest of his brothers could not possibly be more than thirteen years old. His claim of superior merit had been allowed and ratified by the dying emperor ¹⁸. In his last moments, Constantius bequeathed to his eldest son the care of the safety as well as greatness of the family; conjuring him to assume both the authority and the sentiments of a father with regard to the children of Theodora. Their liberal education, advantageous marriages, the secure dignity of their lives, and the first honours of the state with which they were invested, attest the fraternal affection of Constantine; and as those princes possessed a mild and grateful disposition,

¹⁷ Lactantius de M. P. c. 25. Eumenius (vii. 8.) gives a rhetorical turn to the whole transaction.

¹⁸ The choice of Constantine, by his dying father, which is warranted by reason, and insinuated by Eumenius, seems to be confirmed by the most unexceptionable authority, the concurring evidence of Lactantius (de M. P. c. 24.) and of Libanius (Oration i.); of Eusebius (in Vit. Constantin. l. i. c. 18, 21.) and of Julian (Oration i.).

they

they submitted without reluctance to the superiority of his genius and fortune ¹⁹.

II. The ambitious spirit of Galerius was scarcely reconciled to the disappointment of his views upon the Gallic provinces, before the unexpected loss of Italy wounded his pride as well as power in a still more sensible part. The long absence of the emperors had filled Rome with discontent and indignation; and the people gradually discovered, that the preference given to Nicomedia and Milan, was not to be ascribed to the particular inclination of Diocletian, but to the permanent form of government which he had instituted. It was in vain that, a few months after his abdication, his successors dedicated, under his name, those magnificent baths, whose ruins still supply the ground as well as the materials for so many churches and convents ²⁰. The tranquillity of those elegant recesses of ease and luxury was disturbed by the impatient murmurs of the Romans; and a report was insensibly circulated, that the sums expended in erecting

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Discontent
of the Ro-
mans at the
apprehen-
sion of
taxes.

¹⁹ Of the three sisters of Constantine, Constantia married the emperor Licinius, Anastasia the Caesar Bassianus, and Eutropia the consul Nepotianus. The three brothers were, Dalmatius, Julius Constantius, and Annibalianus, of whom we shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

²⁰ See Gruter Inscrip. p. 178. The six princes are all mentioned, Diocletian and Maximian as the senior Augusti and fathers of the emperors. They jointly dedicate, for the use of *their own* Romans, this magnificent edifice. The architects have delineated the ruins of these *Thermae*; and the antiquarians, particularly Donatus and Nardini, have ascertained the ground which they covered. One of the great rooms is now the Carthusian church; and even one of the porter's lodges is sufficient to form another church, which belongs to the Feuillans.

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those buildings, would soon be required at their hands. About that time the avarice of Galerius, or perhaps the exigencies of the state, had induced him to make a very strict and rigorous inquisition into the property of his subjects for the purpose of a general taxation, both on their lands and on their persons. A very minute survey appears to have been taken of their real estates; and wherever there was the slightest suspicion of concealment, torture was very freely employed to obtain a sincere declaration of their personal wealth²¹. The privileges which had exalted Italy above the rank of the provinces, were no longer regarded: and the officers of the revenue already began to number the Roman people, and to settle the proportion of the new taxes. Even when the spirit of freedom had been utterly extinguished, the tamest subjects have sometimes ventured to resist an unprecedented invasion of their property; but on this occasion the injury was aggravated by the insult, and the sense of private interest was quickened by that of national honour. The conquest of Macedonia, as we have already observed, had delivered the Roman people from the weight of personal taxes. Though they had experienced every form of despotism, they had now enjoyed that exemption near five hundred years; nor could they patiently brook the influence of an Illyrian peasant, who, from his distant residence in Asia, presumed to number Rome

²¹ See Lactantius de M. P. c. 26. 31.

among the tributary cities of his empire. The rising fury of the people was encouraged by the authority, or at least the connivance, of the senate; and the feeble remains of the Prætorian guards, who had reason to apprehend their own dissolution, embraced so honourable a pretence, and declared their readiness to draw their swords in the service of their oppressed country. It was the wish, and it soon became the hope, of every citizen, that after expelling from Italy their foreign tyrants, they should elect a prince who, by the place of his residence, and by his maxims of government, might once more deserve the title of Roman emperor. The name, as well as the situation of Maxentius, determined in his favour the popular enthusiasm.

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Maxentius was the son of the emperor Maximian, and he had married the daughter of Galerius. His birth and alliance seemed to offer him the fairest promise of succeeding to the empire; but his vices and incapacity procured him the same exclusion from the dignity of Cæsar, which Constantine had deserved by a dangerous superiority of merit. The policy of Galerius preferred such associates, as would never disgrace the choice, nor dispute the commands, of their benefactor. An obscure stranger was therefore raised to the throne of Italy, and the son of the late emperor of the West was left to enjoy the luxury of a private fortune in a villa a few miles distant from the capital. The gloomy passions of his soul, shame, vexation, and rage, were in-

Maxentius
declared
emperor at
Rome.
A. D. 306.
Oft. 28.

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XIV.

Maximian
re-assumes
the purple.

flamed by envy on the news of Constantine's success; but the hopes of Maxentius revived with the public discontent, and he was easily persuaded to unite his personal injury and pretensions with the cause of the Roman people. Two Prætorian tribunes and a commissary of provisions undertook the management of the conspiracy; and as every order of men was actuated by the same spirit, the immediate event was neither doubtful nor difficult. The præfect of the city and a few magistrates, who maintained their fidelity to Severus, were massacred by the guards; and Maxentius, invested with the Imperial ornaments, was acknowledged by the applauding senate and people as the protector of the Roman freedom and dignity. It is uncertain whether Maximian was previously acquainted with the conspiracy; but as soon as the standard of rebellion was erected at Rome, the old emperor broke from the retirement where the authority of Diocletian had condemned him to pass a life of melancholy solitude, and concealed his returning ambition under the disguise of paternal tenderness. At the request of his son and of the senate, he condescended to re-assume the purple. His ancient dignity, his experience, and his fame in arms, added strength as well as reputation to the party of Maxentius²².

²² The sixth Panegyric represents the conduct of Maximian in the most favourable light; and the ambiguous expression of Aurelius Victor, "*retractante diu*," may signify, either that he contrived, or that he opposed, the conspiracy. See Zosimus, l. ii. p. 79. and Lactantius de M. P. c. 26.

Accord-

According to the advice, or rather the orders, of his colleague, the emperor Severus immediately hastened to Rome, in the full confidence, that, by his unexpected celerity, he should easily suppress the tumult of an unwarlike populace, commanded by a licentious youth. But he found on his arrival the gates of the city shut against him, the walls filled with men and arms, an experienced general at the head of the rebels, and his own troops without spirit or affection. A large body of Moors deserted to the enemy, allured by the promise of a large donative; and, if it be true that they had been levied by Maximian in his African war, preferring the natural feelings of gratitude to the artificial ties of allegiance. Anulinus, the Prætorian præfect, declared himself in favour of Maxentius, and drew after him the most considerable part of the troops, accustomed to obey his commands. Rome, according to the expression of an orator, recalled her armies; and the unfortunate Severus, destitute of force and of counsel, retired, or rather fled, with precipitation to Ravenna. Here he might for some time have been safe. The fortifications of Ravenna were able to resist the attempts, and the morasses that surrounded the town were sufficient to prevent the approach, of the Italian army. The sea, which Severus commanded with a powerful fleet, secured him an inexhaustible supply of provisions, and gave a free entrance to the legions, which, on the return of spring, would advance to his assistance from Illyricum

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Defeat and
death of
Severus.

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Illyricum and the East. Maximian, who conducted the siege in person, was soon convinced that he might waste his time and his army in the fruitless enterprize, and that he had nothing to hope either from force or famine. With an art more suitable to the character of Diocletian than to his own, he directed his attack, not so much against the walls of Ravenna, as against the mind of Severus. The treachery which he had experienced, disposed that unhappy prince to distrust the most sincere of his friends and adherents. The emissaries of Maximian easily persuaded his credulity, that a conspiracy was formed to betray the town, and prevailed upon his fears not to expose himself to the discretion of an irritated conqueror, but to accept the faith of an honourable capitulation. He was at first received with humanity, and treated with respect. Maximian conducted the captive emperor to Rome, and gave him the most solemn assurances that he had secured his life by the resignation of the purple. But Severus could obtain only an easy death and an Imperial funeral. When the sentence was signified to him, the manner of executing it was left to his own choice; he preferred the favourite mode of the ancients, that of opening his veins; and as soon as he expired, his body was carried to the sepulchre which had been constructed for the family of Gallienus²³.

A.D. 307.
February.

²³ The circumstances of this war, and the death of Severus, are very doubtfully and variously told in our ancient fragments (see Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. part i. p. 555.). I have endeavoured to extract from them a consistent and probable narration.

Though

Though the characters of Constantine and Maxentius had very little affinity with each other, their situation and interest were the same; and prudence seemed to require that they should unite their forces against the common enemy. Notwithstanding the superiority of his age and dignity, the indefatigable Maximian passed the Alps, and courting a personal interview with the sovereign of Gaul, carried with him his daughter Fausta as the pledge of the new alliance. The marriage was celebrated at Arles with every circumstance of magnificence; and the ancient colleague of Diocletian, who again asserted his claim to the western empire, conferred on his son-in-law and ally the title of Augustus. By consenting to receive that honour from Maximian, Constantine seemed to embrace the cause of Rome and of the senate; but his professions were ambiguous, and his assistance slow and ineffectual. He considered with attention the approaching contest between the masters of Italy and the emperor of the East, and was prepared to consult his own safety or ambition in the event of the war ²⁴.

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Maximian gives his daughter Fausta, and the title of Augustus, to Constantine.
A.D. 307.
March 31.

The importance of the occasion called for the presence and abilities of Galerius. At the head of a powerful army collected from Illyricum and the East, he entered Italy, resolved to revenge the death of Severus, and to chastise the rebel-

Galerius invades Italy.

²⁴ The vith Panegyric was pronounced to celebrate the elevation of Constantine; but the prudent orator avoids the mention either of Galerius or of Maxentius. He introduces only one slight allusion to the actual troubles, and to the majesty of Rome.

lions

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lious Romans; or, as he expressed his intentions, in the furious language of a barbarian, to extirpate the senate, and to destroy the people by the sword. But the skill of Maximian had concerted a prudent system of defence. The invader found every place hostile, fortified, and inaccessible; and though he forced his way as far as Narni, within sixty miles of Rome, his dominion in Italy was confined to the narrow limits of his camp. Sensible of the increasing difficulties of his enterprise, the haughty Galerius made the first advances towards a reconciliation, and dispatched two of his most considerable officers to tempt the Roman princes by the offer of a conference, and the declaration of his paternal regard for Maxentius, who might obtain much more from his liberality than he could hope from the doubtful chance of war²⁵. The offers of Galerius were rejected with firmness, his perfidious friendship refused with contempt, and it was not long before he discovered, that, unless he provided for his safety by a timely retreat, he had some reason to apprehend the fate of Severus. The wealth, which the Romans defended against his rapacious tyranny, they freely contributed for his destruction. The name of Maximian, the popular arts of his son, the secret distribution of large sums, and the promise of still more liberal rewards,

²⁵ With regard to this negotiation, see the fragments of an anonymous historian, published by Valesius at the end of his edition of Ammianus Marcellinus, p. 711. These fragments have furnished us with several curious, and, as it should seem, authentic anecdotes.

checked

checked the ardour and corrupted the fidelity of the Illyrian legions; and when Galerius at length gave the signal of the retreat, it was with some difficulty that he could prevail on his veterans not to desert a banner which had so often conducted them to victory and honour. A contemporary writer assigns two other causes for the failure of the expedition; but they are both of such a nature, that a cautious historian will scarcely venture to adopt them. We are told that Galerius, who had formed a very imperfect notion of the greatness of Rome by the cities of the East, with which he was acquainted, found his forces inadequate to the siege of that immense capital. But the extent of a city serves only to render it more accessible to the enemy; Rome had long since been accustomed to submit on the approach of a conqueror; nor could the temporary enthusiasm of the people have long contended against the discipline and valour of the legions. We are likewise informed, that the legions themselves were struck with horror and remorse, and that those pious sons of the republic refused to violate the sanctity of their venerable parent²⁶. But when we recollect with how much ease, in the more ancient civil wars, the zeal of party, and the habits of military obedience, had converted the native citizens of Rome into her most implacable enemies, we shall be inclined to

²⁶ Lactantius de M. P. c. 28. The former of these reasons is probably taken from Virgil's Shepherd: "Illam ego huic nostræ similem Melibœe putavi, &c." Lactantius delights in these poetical allusions.

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distrust this extreme delicacy of strangers and barbarians, who had never beheld Italy till they entered it in a hostile manner. Had they not been restrained by motives of a more interested nature, they would probably have answered Galerius in the words of Cæsar's veterans: "If our general wishes to lead us to the banks of the Tyber, we are prepared to trace out his camp. Whatsoever walls he has determined to level with the ground, our hands are ready to work the engines: nor shall we hesitate, should the name of the devoted city be Rome itself." These are indeed the expressions of a poet; but of a poet who has been distinguished and even censured for his strict adherence to the truth of history²⁷.

His retreat.

The legions of Galerius exhibit a very melancholy proof of their disposition, by the ravages which they committed in their retreat. They murdered, they ravished, they plundered, they drove away the flocks and herds of the Italians. They burnt the villages through which they passed, and they endeavoured to destroy the country which it had not been in their power to subdue. During the whole march, Maxentius hung on their rear, but he very prudently declined a general engagement with those brave and desperate

²⁷ *Castra super Tusci si ponere Tybridis undas; (jubeas)*

Hesperios audax veniam metator in agros.

Tu quoscunque voles in planum effundere muros,

His aries æstus disperget saxa lacertis;

Illa licet penitus tolli quam jufferis urbem

Roma sit.

Lucan. Pharsal. i. 381.

veterans.

veterans. His father had undertaken a second journey into Gaul, with the hope of persuading Constantine, who had assembled an army on the frontier, to join the pursuit and to complete the victory. But the actions of Constantine were guided by reason and not by resentment. He persisted in the wise resolution of maintaining a balance of power in the divided empire, and he no longer hated Galerius, when that aspiring prince had ceased to be an object of terror²⁸.

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The mind of Galerius was the most susceptible of the sterner passions, but it was not, however, incapable of a sincere and lasting friendship. Licinius, whose manners as well as character were not unlike his own, seems to have engaged both his affection and esteem. Their intimacy had commenced in the happier period perhaps of their youth and obscurity. It had been cemented by the freedom and dangers of a military life; they had advanced, almost by equal steps, through the successive honours of the service; and as soon as Galerius was invested with the Imperial dignity, he seems to have conceived the design of raising his companion to the same rank with himself. During the short period of his prosperity, he considered the rank of Cæsar as unworthy of the age and merit of Licinius, and rather chose to reserve for him the place of Constantius, and the empire of the West. While the emperor

Elevation
of Licinius
to the rank
of Augustus.
A.D. 307.
Nov. 22.

²⁸ Lactantius de M. P. c. 27. Zosim. l. ii. p. 82. The latter insinuates, that Constantine, in his interview with Maximian, had promised to declare war against Galerius.

was

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and of
Maximin.

Six empe-
rors.
A.D. 308.

was employed in the Italian war, he intrusted his friend with the defence of the Danube; and immediately after his return from that unfortunate expedition, he invested Licinius with the vacant purple of Severus, resigning to his immediate command the provinces of Illyricum²⁹. The news of his promotion was no sooner carried into the East, than Maximin, who governed, or rather oppressed, the countries of Egypt and Syria, betrayed his envy and discontent, disdained the inferior name of Cæsar, and, notwithstanding the prayers as well as arguments of Galerius, exacted, almost by violence, the equal title of Augustus³⁰. For the first, and indeed for the last time, the Roman world was administered by six emperors. In the West, Constantine and Maxentius affected to reverence their father Maximian. In the East, Licinius and Maximin honoured with more real consideration their benefactor Galerius. The opposition of interest, and the memory of a recent war, divided the empire into two great hostile powers; but their mutual fears produced an apparent tranquillity, and even a feigned recon-

²⁹ M. de Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. part i. p. 559.) has proved, that Licinius, without passing through the intermediate rank of Cæsar, was declared Augustus, the 11th of November, A. D. 307, after the return of Galerius from Italy.

³⁰ Lactantius de M. P. c. 32. When Galerius declared Licinius Augustus with himself, he tried to satisfy his younger associates, by inventing, for Constantine and Maximin (not Maxentius, see Baluze, p. 81.), the new title of sons of the Augusti. But when Maximin acquainted him that he had been saluted Augustus by the army, Galerius was obliged to acknowledge him, as well as Constantine, as equal associates in the Imperial dignity.

ciliation,

ciliation, till the death of the elder princes, of Maximian, and more particularly of Galerius, gave a new direction to the views and passions of their surviving associates.

When Maximian had reluctantly abdicated the empire, the venal orators of the times applauded his philosophic moderation. When his ambition excited, or at least encouraged, a civil war, they returned thanks to his generous patriotism, and gently censured that love of ease and retirement which had withdrawn him from the public service³¹. But it was impossible that minds like those of Maximian and his son, could long possess in harmony an undivided power. Maxentius considered himself as the legal sovereign of Italy, elected by the Roman senate and people; nor would he endure the controul of his father, who arrogantly declared, that by *his* name and abilities the rash youth had been established on the throne. The cause was solemnly pleaded before the Prætorian guards, and those troops, who dreaded the severity of the old emperor, espoused the party of Maxentius³². The life and freedom of Maximian were however respected, and he retired from Italy into Illyricum, affecting to lament his past conduct, and secretly contriving

Misfor-
tunes of
Maximian;

³¹ See Panegy. Vet. vi. 9. Audi doloris nostri liberam vocem, &c. The whole passage is imagined with artful flattery, and expressed with an easy flow of eloquence.

³² Lactantius de M. P. c. 28. Zosim. l. ii. p. 82. A report was spread, that Maxentius was the son of some obscure Syrian, and had been substituted by the wife of Maximian as her own child. See Aurelius Victor, Anonym. Valefian. and Panegy. Vet. ix. 3, 4.

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new mischiefs. But Galerius, who was well acquainted with his character, soon obliged him to leave his dominions, and the last refuge of the disappointed Maximian was the court of his son-in-law Constantine³³. He was received with respect by that artful prince, and with the appearance of filial tenderness by the empress Fausta. That he might remove every suspicion, he resigned the Imperial purple a second time³⁴, professing himself at length convinced of the vanity of greatness and ambition. Had he persevered in this resolution, he might have ended his life with less dignity, indeed, than in his first retirement, yet, however, with comfort and reputation. But the near prospect of a throne brought back to his remembrance the state from whence he was fallen, and he resolved, by a desperate effort, either to reign or to perish. An incursion of the Franks had summoned Constantine, with a part of his army, to the banks of the Rhine; the remainder of the troops were stationed in the southern provinces of Gaul, which lay exposed to the enterprises of the Italian emperor, and a considerable treasure was deposited in the city of Arles. Maximian either craftily invented, or hastily credited, a vain report of the death of

³³ Ab urbe pulsum, ab Italia fugatum, ab Illyrico repudiatum, tuis provinciis, tuis copiis, tuo palatio recepisti. Eumen. in Panegy. Vet. vii. 14.

³⁴ Lactantius de M. P. c. 29. Yet after the resignation of the purple, Constantine still continued to Maximian the pomp and honours of the Imperial dignity; and, on all public occasions, gave the right-hand place to his father-in-law. Panegy. Vet. vii. 15.

Constan-

Constantine. Without hesitation he ascended the throne, seized the treasure, and scattering it with his accustomed profusion among the soldiers, endeavoured to awake in their minds the memory of his ancient dignity and exploits. Before he could establish his authority, or finish the negotiation which he appears to have entered into with his son Maxentius, the celerity of Constantine defeated all his hopes. On the first news of his perfidy and ingratitude, that prince returned by rapid marches from the Rhine to the Saone, embarked on the last mentioned river at Chalons, and at Lyons trusting himself to the rapidity of the Rhone, arrived at the gates of Arles, with a military force which it was impossible for Maximian to resist, and which scarcely permitted him to take refuge in the neighbouring city of Marseilles. The narrow neck of land which joined that place to the continent was fortified against the besiegers, whilst the sea was open, either for the escape of Maximian, or for the succours of Maxentius, if the latter should chuse to disguise his invasion of Gaul, under the honourable pretence of defending a distressed, or, as he might allege, an injured father. Apprehensive of the fatal consequences of delay, Constantine gave orders for an immediate assault; but the scaling-ladders were found too short for the height of the walls, and Marseilles might have sustained as long a siege as it formerly did against the arms of Cæsar, if the garrison, conscious either of their fault or of their danger, had not pur-

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His death.
A.D. 310.
February.

chased their pardon by delivering up the city and the person of Maximian. A secret but irrevocable sentence of death was pronounced against the usurper, he obtained only the same favour which he had indulged to Severus, and it was published to the world, that, oppressed by the remorse of his repeated crimes, he strangled himself with his own hands. After he had lost the assistance, and disdained the moderate counsels, of Diocletian, the second period of his active life was a series of public calamities and personal mortifications, which were terminated, in about three years, by an ignominious death. He deserved his fate; but we should find more reason to applaud the humanity of Constantine, if he had spared an old man, the benefactor of his father, and the father of his wife. During the whole of this melancholy transaction, it appears that Fausta sacrificed the sentiments of nature to her conjugal duties³⁵.

Death of
Galerius.
A.D. 311.
May.

The last years of Galerius were less shameful and unfortunate; and though he had filled with more glory the subordinate station of Cæsar, than the superior rank of Augustus, he preserved, till the moment of his death, the first place among the princes of the Roman world. He survived

³⁵ Zosim. l. ii. p. 82. Eumenius in Panegy. Vet. vii. 26—27. The latter of these has undoubtedly represented the whole affair in the most favourable light for his sovereign. Yet even from this partial narrative we may conclude, that the repeated clemency of Constantine, and the reiterated treasons of Maximian, as they are described by Lactantius (de M. P. c. 29, 30.), and copied by the moderns, are destitute of any historical foundation.

his

his retreat from Italy about four years, and wisely relinquishing his views of universal empire, he devoted the remainder of his life to the enjoyment of pleasure, and to the execution of some works of public utility, among which we may distinguish the discharging into the Danube the superfluous waters of the lake Pelfo, and the cutting down the immense forests that encompassed it; an operation worthy of a monarch, since it gave an extensive country to the agriculture of his Pannonian subjects³⁶. His death was occasioned by a very painful and lingering disorder. His body, swelled by an intemperate course of life to an unwieldy corpulence, was covered with ulcers, and devoured by innumerable swarms of those insects who have given their name to a most loathsome disease³⁷; but as Galerius had offended a very zealous and powerful party among his subjects, his sufferings, instead of exciting their compassion, have been celebrated as the visible effects of divine justice³⁸.

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He

³⁶ Aurelius Victor, c. 40. But that lake was situated on the Upper Pannonia, near the borders of Noricum; and the province of Valeria (a name which the wife of Galerius gave to the drained country) undoubtedly lay between the Drave and the Danube (Sextus Rufus, c. 9.). I should therefore suspect that Victor has confounded the lake Pelfo with the Volocean marches, or, as they are now called, the lake Sabaton. It is placed in the heart of Valeria, and its present extent is not less than 12 Hungarian miles (about 70 English) in length, and two in breadth. See Severini Pannonia, l. i. c. 9.

³⁷ Lactantius (de M. P. c. 33.) and Eusebius (l. viii. c. 16.) describe the symptoms and progress of his disorder with singular accuracy and apparent pleasure.

³⁸ If any (like the late Dr. Jortin, Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 307—356.) still delight in recording the wonderful

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death

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His domi-
nion shared
between
Maximin
and Lici-
nius.

He had no sooner expired in his palace of Nicomedia, than the two emperors who were indebted for their purple to his favour, began to collect their forces, with the intention either of disputing, or of dividing, the dominions which he had left without a master. They were persuaded, however, to desist from the former design, and to agree in the latter. The provinces of Asia fell to the share of Maximin, and those of Europe augmented the portion of Licinius. The Hellespont and the Thracian Bosphorus formed their mutual boundary, and the banks of those narrow seas, which flowed in the midst of the Roman world, were covered with soldiers, with arms, and with fortifications. The deaths of Maximian, and of Galerius reduced the number of emperors to four. The sense of their true interest soon connected Licinius and Constantine; a secret alliance was concluded between Maximin and Maxentius, and their unhappy subjects expected with terror the bloody consequences of their inevitable dissensions, which were no longer restrained by the fear or the respect which they had entertained for Galerius³⁹.

Admini-
stration of
Constantine in
Gaul.
A.D. 306
—312.

Among so many crimes and misfortunes occasioned by the passions of the Roman princes, there is some pleasure in discovering a single

death of the persecutors, I would recommend to their perusal an admirable passage of Grotius (*Hist. l. vii. p. 332.*) concerning the last illness of Philip II. of Spain.

³⁹ See Eusebius, l. ix. c. 30. Lactantius de M. P. c. 36. Zosimus is less exact, and evidently confounds Maximian with Maximin.

action

action which may be ascribed to their virtue. In the sixth year of his reign, Constantine visited the city of Autun, and generously remitted the arrears of tribute, reducing at the same time the proportion of their assessment, from twenty-five to eighteen thousand heads, subject to the real and personal capitation⁴⁰. Yet even this indulgence affords the most unquestionable proof of the public misery. This tax was so extremely oppressive, either in itself, or in the mode of collecting it, that whilst the revenue was increased by extortion, it was diminished by despair: a considerable part of the territory of Autun was left uncultivated; and great numbers of the provincials rather chose to live as exiles and outlaws, than to support the weight of civil society. It is but too probable, that the bountiful emperor relieved, by a partial act of liberality, one among the many evils which he had caused by his general maxims of administration. But even those maxims were less the effect of choice than of necessity. And if we except the death of Maximian, the reign of Constantine in Gaul seems to have been the most innocent and even virtuous period of his life. The provinces were protected by his presence from the inroads of the barbarians, who either dreaded or experienced his active valour. After a signal victory over the Franks and Alemanni, several of their princes

⁴⁰ See the viiith Panegy. in which Eumenius displays, in the presence of Constantine, the misery and the gratitude of the city of Autun.

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were exposed by his order to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre of Treves, and the people seem to have enjoyed the spectacle, without discovering, in such a treatment of royal captives, any thing that was repugnant to the laws of nations or of humanity ⁴¹.

Tyranny
of Maxen-
tius in
Italy and
Africa.
A.D. 306
—312.

The virtues of Constantine were rendered more illustrious by the vices of Maxentius. Whilst the Gallic provinces enjoyed as much happiness as the condition of the times was capable of receiving, Italy and Africa groaned under the dominion of a tyrant as contemptible as he was odious. The zeal of flattery and faction has indeed too frequently sacrificed the reputation of the vanquished to the glory of their successful rivals; but even those writers who have revealed, with the most freedom and pleasure, the faults of Constantine, unanimously confess, that Maxentius was cruel, rapacious, and profligate ⁴². He had the good fortune to suppress a slight rebellion in Africa. The governor and a few adherents had been guilty; the province suffered for their crime. The flourishing cities of Cirtha and Carthage, and the whole extent of that fertile country, were wasted by fire and sword. The abuse of victory was followed by the abuse of law and justice. A formidable army of sycophants

⁴¹ Eutropius, x. 3. Panegy. Veter. vii. 10, 11, 12. A great number of the French youth were likewise exposed to the same cruel and ignominious death.

⁴² Julian excludes Maxentius from the banquet of the Cæsars with abhorrence and contempt; and Zosimus (l. ii. p. 85.) accuses him of every kind of cruelty and profligacy,

and

and delators invaded Africa; the rich and the noble were easily convicted of a connection with the rebels; and those among them who experienced the emperor's clemency, were only punished by the confiscation of their estates⁴³. So signal a victory was celebrated by a magnificent triumph, and Maxentius exposed to the eyes of the people the spoils and captives of a Roman province. The state of the capital was no less deserving of compassion than that of Africa. The wealth of Rome supplied an inexhaustible fund for his vain and prodigal expences, and the ministers of his revenue were skilled in the arts of rapine. It was under his reign that the method of exacting a *free gift* from the senators, was first invented; and as the sum was insensibly increased, the pretences of levying it, a victory, a birth, a marriage, or an Imperial consulship, were proportionably multiplied⁴⁴. Maxentius had imbibed the same implacable aversion to the senate, which had characterized most of the former tyrants of Rome: nor was it possible for his ungrateful temper to forgive the generous fidelity which had raised him to the throne, and supported him against all his enemies. The lives of the senators were exposed to his jealous suspicions, the dishonour of their wives and daughters heightened the gratification of his sensual pas-

⁴³ Zosimus, l. ii. p. 83—85. Aurelius Victor.

⁴⁴ The passage of Aurelius Victor should be read in the following manner: *Primus instituto pessimo, munusum specie, Patres Oratoresque pecuniam conferre prodigenti sibi cogeret.*

sions,

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sions⁴⁵. It may be presumed that an Imperial lover was seldom reduced to sigh in vain; but whenever persuasion proved ineffectual, he had recourse to violence; and there remains *one* memorable example of a noble matron, who preserved her chastity by a voluntary death. The soldiers were the only order of men whom he appeared to respect, or studied to please. He filled Rome and Italy with armed troops, connived at their tumults, suffered them with impunity to plunder, and even to massacre, the defenceless people⁴⁶; and indulging them in the same licentiousness which their emperor enjoyed, Maxentius often bestowed on his military favourites the splendid villa, or the beautiful wife, of a senator. A prince of such a character, alike incapable of governing either in peace or in war, might purchase the support, but he could never obtain the esteem, of the army. Yet his pride was equal to his other vices. Whilst he passed his indolent life, either within the walls of his palace, or in the neighbouring gardens of Salust, he was repeatedly heard to declare, that *he alone* was emperor, and that the other princes were no more than his lieutenants, on whom he

⁴⁵ Panegyr. Vet. ix. 3. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. viii. 14. et in Vit. Constant. i. 33, 34. Rufinus, c. 17. The virtuous matron, who stabbed herself to escape the violence of Maxentius, was a Christian, wife to the præfect of the city, and her name was Sophronia. It still remains a question among the casuists, Whether, on such occasions, suicide is justifiable?

⁴⁶ Prætorianis cædem vulgi quondam annueret, is the vague expression of Aurelius Victor. See more particular, though somewhat different, accounts of a tumult and massacre which happened at Rome, in Eusebius (l. viii. c. 14.) and in Zosimus (l. ii. p. 84.).

had devolved the defence of the frontier provinces, that he might enjoy without interruption the elegant luxury of the capital. Rome, which had so long regretted the absence, lamented, during the six years of his reign, the presence of her sovereign ⁴⁷.

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Though Constantine might view the conduct of Maxentius with abhorrence, and the situation of the Romans with compassion, we have no reason to presume that he would have taken up arms to punish the one, or to relieve the other. But the tyrant of Italy rashly ventured to provoke a formidable enemy, whose ambition had been hitherto restrained by considerations of prudence, rather than by principles of justice ⁴⁸. After the death of Maximian, his titles, according to the established custom, had been erased, and his statues thrown down with ignominy. His son, who had persecuted and deserted him when alive, affected to display the most pious regard to his memory, and gave orders that a similar treatment should be immediately inflicted on all the statues that had been erected in Italy and Africa to the honour of Constantine. That wife prince, who sincerely wished to decline a

Civil war
between
Constantine and
Maxentius.
A.D. 312.

⁴⁷ See in the Panegyrics (ix. 14.), a lively description of the indolence and vain pride of Maxentius. In another place the orator observes, that the riches which Rome had accumulated in a period of 1060 years, were lavished by the tyrant on his mercenary bands; redemptis ad civile latrocinium manibus ingesserat.

⁴⁸ After the victory of Constantine, it was universally allowed, that the motive of delivering the republic from a detested tyrant, would, at any time, have justified his expedition into Italy. Euseb. in Vit. Constantin. l. i. c. 26. Panegy. Vet. ix. 2.

war,

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war, with the difficulty and importance of which he was sufficiently acquainted, at first dissembled the insult, and sought for redress by the milder expedients of negotiation, till he was convinced, that the hostile and ambitious designs of the Italian emperor made it necessary for him to arm in his own defence. Maxentius, who openly avowed his pretensions to the whole monarchy of the West, had already prepared a very considerable force to invade the Gallic provinces on the side of Rhætia, and though he could not expect any assistance from Licinius, he was flattered with the hope that the legions of Illyricum, allured by his presents and promises, would desert the standard of that prince, and unanimously declare themselves his soldiers and subjects⁴⁹. Constantine no longer hesitated. He had deliberated with caution, he acted with vigour. He gave a private audience to the ambassadors, who, in the name of the senate and people, conjured him to deliver Rome from a detested tyrant; and, without regarding the timid remonstrances of his council, he resolved to prevent the enemy, and to carry the war into the heart of Italy⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ Zosimus, l. ii. p. 84, 85. Nazarius in Panegy. x. 7—13.

⁵⁰ See Panegy. Vet. ix. 2. *Omnibus fere tuis Comitibus et Ducibus non solum tacite mustantibus, sed etiam aperte timentibus; contra consilia hominum, contra Haruspicum monita, ipse per temet liberandæ urbis tempus venisse sentire.* The embassy of the Romans is mentioned only by Zonaras (l. xiii.) and by Cedrenus (in Compend. Hist. p. 270.): but those modern Greeks had the opportunity of consulting many writers which have since been lost, among which we may reckon the life of Constantine by Praxagoras. Photius (p. 63.) has made a short extract from that historical work.

The

The enterprize was as full of danger as of glory; and the unsuccessful event of two former invasions was sufficient to inspire the most serious apprehensions. The veteran troops who revered the name of Maximian, had embraced in both those wars the party of his son, and were now restrained by a sense of honour, as well as of interest, from entertaining an idea of a second desertion. Maxentius, who considered the Prætorian guards as the firmest defence of his throne, had increased them to their ancient establishment; and they composed, including the rest of the Italians, who were enlisted into his service, a formidable body of fourscore thousand men. Forty thousand Moors and Carthaginians had been raised since the reduction of Africa. Even Sicily furnished its proportion of troops; and the armies of Maxentius amounted to one hundred and seventy thousand foot, and eighteen thousand horse. The wealth of Italy supplied the expences of the war; and the adjacent provinces were exhausted, to form immense magazines of corn and every other kind of provisions. The whole force of Constantine consisted of ninety thousand foot and eight thousand horse⁵¹; and as the defence of the Rhine required an extraordinary attention during the absence of the emperor, it was not in his power to employ

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tions.

⁵¹ Zosimus (l. ii. p. 86.) has given us this curious account of the forces on both sides. He makes no mention of any naval armaments, though we are assured (Panegy. Vet. ix. 25.) that the war was carried on by sea as well as by land; and that the fleet of Constantine took possession of Sardinia, Corsica, and the ports of Italy.

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above half his troops in the Italian expedition, unless he sacrificed the public safety to his private quarrel⁵². At the head of about forty thousand soldiers, he marched to encounter an enemy whose numbers were at least four times superior to his own. But the armies of Rome, placed at a secure distance from danger, were enervated by indulgence and luxury. Habituated to the baths and theatres of Rome, they took the field with reluctance, and were chiefly composed of veterans who had almost forgotten, or of new levies, who had never acquitted, the use of arms and the practice of war. The hardy legions of Gaul had long defended the frontiers of the empire against the barbarians of the North; and in the performance of that laborious service, their valour was exercised, and their discipline confirmed. There appeared the same difference between the leaders as between the armies. Caprice or flattery had tempted Maxentius with the hopes of conquest; but these aspiring hopes soon gave way to the habits of pleasure and the consciousness of his inexperience. The intrepid mind of Constantine had been trained from his earliest youth to war, to action, and to military command.

Constantine passes the Alps.

When Hannibal marched from Gaul into Italy, he was obliged, first, to discover, and then to

⁵² Panegy. Vet. ix. 3. It is not surprising that the orator should diminish the numbers with which his sovereign achieved the conquest of Italy; but it appears somewhat singular that he should esteem the tyrant's army at no more than 100,000 men.

open,

open, a way over mountains and through savage nations, that had never yielded a passage to a regular army³³. The Alps were then guarded by nature, they are now fortified by art. Citadels constructed with no less skill than labour and expence, command every avenue into the plain, and on that side render Italy almost inaccessible to the enemies of the king of Sardinia³⁴. But in the course of the intermediate period, the generals, who have attempted the passage, have seldom experienced any difficulty or resistance. In the age of Constantine, the peasants of the mountains were civilized and obedient subjects; the country was plentifully stocked with provisions, and the stupendous highways, which the Romans had carried over the Alps, opened several communications between Gaul and Italy³⁵. Constantine preferred the road of the Cottian Alps, or, as it is now called, of Mount Cenis, and led his troops with such active diligence that he descended into the plain

³³ The three principal passages of the Alps between Gaul and Italy, are those of Mount St. Bernard, Mount Cenis, and Mount Genevre. Tradition, and a resemblance of names (*Alpes Pennine*), had assigned the first of these for the march of Hannibal (see Simler de Alpibus). The Chevalier de Folard (Polybe, tom. iv.) and M. d'Anville have led him over mount Genevre. But notwithstanding the authority of an experienced officer and a learned geographer, the pretensions of Mount Cenis are supported in a specious, not to say a convincing, manner by M. Grosley. *Observations sur l'Italie*, tom. i. p. 40, &c.

³⁴ La Brunette near Susse, Demont, Exiles, Fenestrelles, Coni, &c.

³⁵ See Ammian. Marcellin. xv. 10. His description of the roads over the Alps, is clear, lively, and accurate.

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Battle of
Turin.

of Piedmont before the court of Maxentius had received any certain intelligence of his departure from the banks of the Rhine. The city of Susa, however, which is situated at the foot of Mount Cenis, was surrounded with walls, and provided with a garrison sufficiently numerous to check the progress of an invader; but the impatience of Constantine's troops disdained the tedious forms of a siege. The same day that they appeared before Susa, they applied fire to the gates, and ladders to the walls; and mounting to the assault amidst a shower of stones and arrows, they entered the place sword in hand, and cut in pieces the greatest part of the garrison. The flames were extinguished by the care of Constantine, and the remains of Susa preserved from total destruction. About forty miles from thence, a more severe contest awaited him. A numerous army of Italians was assembled under the lieutenants of Maxentius in the plains of Turin. Its principal strength consisted in a species of heavy cavalry, which the Romans, since the decline of their discipline, had borrowed from the nations of the East. The horses, as well as the men, were clothed in complete armour, the joints of which were artfully adapted to the motions of their bodies. The aspect of this cavalry was formidable, their weight almost irresistible; and as, on this occasion, their generals had drawn them up in a compact column or wedge, with a sharp point, and with spreading
flanks,

flanks, they flattered themselves that they should easily break and trample down the army of Constantine. They might, perhaps, have succeeded in their design, had not their experienced adversary embraced the same method of defence, which in similar circumstances had been practised by Aurelian. The skilful evolutions of Constantine divided and baffled this massy column of cavalry. The troops of Maxentius fled in confusion towards Turin; and as the gates of the city were shut against them, very few escaped the sword of the victorious pursuers. By this important service, Turin deserved to experience the clemency and even favour of the conqueror. He made his entry into the Imperial palace of Milan, and almost all the cities of Italy between the Alps and the Po not only acknowledged the power, but embraced with zeal the party, of Constantine⁵⁶.

Siege and
battle of
Verona.

From Milan to Rome, the Æmilian and Flaminian highways offered an easy march of about four hundred miles; but though Constantine was impatient to encounter the tyrant, he prudently directed his operations against another army of Italians, who, by their strength and position, might either oppose his progress, or, in case of a misfortune, might intercept his retreat. Ruricius Pompeianus, a general distinguished by his valour and ability, had under his

⁵⁶ Zosimus as well as Eusebius hasten from the passage of the Alps, to the decisive action near Rome. We must apply to the two Panegyrics, for the intermediate actions of Constantine.

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command the city of Verona, and all the troops that were stationed in the province of Venetia. As soon as he was informed that Constantine was advancing towards him, he detached a large body of cavalry, which was defeated in an engagement near Brescia, and pursued by the Gallic legions as far as the gates of Verona. The necessity, the importance, and the difficulties of the siege of Verona, immediately presented themselves to the sagacious mind of Constantine⁵⁷. The city was accessible only by a narrow peninsula towards the west, as the other three sides were surrounded by the Adige, a rapid river which covered the province of Venetia, from whence the besieged derived an inexhaustible supply of men and provisions. It was not without great difficulty, and after several fruitless attempts, that Constantine found means to pass the river at some distance above the city, and in a place where the torrent was less violent. He then encompassed Verona with strong lines, pushed his attacks with prudent vigour, and repelled a desperate sally of Pompeianus. That intrepid general, when he had used every means of defence that the strength of the place or that of the garrison could afford, secretly escaped from Ve-

⁵⁷ The Marquis Maffei has examined the siege and battle of Verona, with that degree of attention and accuracy, which was due to a memorable action that happened in his native country. The fortifications of that city, constructed by Gallienus, were less extensive than the modern walls, and the amphitheatre was not included within their circumference. See *Verona Illustrata*, Part i. p. 142. 150.

rona,

rona, anxious not for his own but for the public safety. With indefatigable diligence he soon collected an army sufficient either to meet Constantine in the field, or to attack him if he obstinately remained within his lines. The emperor, attentive to the motions, and informed of the approach, of so formidable an enemy, left a part of his legions to continue the operations of the siege, whilst, at the head of those troops on whose valour and fidelity he more particularly depended, he advanced in person to engage the general of Maxentius. The army of Gaul was drawn up in two lines, according to the usual practice of war; but their experienced leader, perceiving that the numbers of the Italians far exceeded his own, suddenly changed his disposition, and reducing the second, extended the front of his first line, to a just proportion with that of the enemy. Such evolutions, which only veteran troops can execute without confusion in a moment of danger, commonly prove decisive: but as this engagement began towards the close of the day, and was contested with great obstinacy during the whole night, there was less room for the conduct of the generals than for the courage of the soldiers. The return of light displayed the victory of Constantine, and a field of carnage covered with many thousands of the vanquished Italians. Their general, Pompeianus, was found among the slain; Verona immediately surrendered at discretion, and the garrison was

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made

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made prisoners of war⁵⁸. When the officers of the victorious army congratulated their master on this important success, they ventured to add some respectful complaints, of such a nature, however, as the most jealous monarchs will listen to without displeasure. They represented to Constantine, that, not contented with performing all the duties of a commander, he had exposed his own person with an excess of valour which almost degenerated into rashness; and they conjured him for the future to pay more regard to the preservation of a life, in which the safety of Rome and of the empire was involved⁵⁹.

Indolence
and fears of
Maxentius.

While Constantine signalized his conduct and valour in the field, the sovereign of Italy appeared insensible of the calamities and danger of a civil war which raged in the heart of his dominions. Pleasure was still the only business of Maxentius. Concealing, or at least attempting to conceal, from the public knowledge the misfortunes of his arms⁶⁰, he indulged himself in a vain confidence, which deferred the remedies of the approaching evil, without deferring the evil itself⁶¹. The rapid progress of Constan-

⁵⁸ They wanted chains for so great a multitude of captives; and the whole council was at a loss; but the sagacious conqueror imagined the happy expedient of converting into fetters the swords of the vanquished. Panegy. Vet. ix. 11.

⁵⁹ Panegy. Vet. ix. 10.

⁶⁰ Literas calamitatum suarum indices supprimebat. Panegy. Vet. ix. 15.

⁶¹ Remedia malorum potius quam mala differebat, is the fine censure which Tacitus passes on the supine indolence of Vitellius.

tine

time⁶² was scarcely sufficient to awaken him from this fatal security; he flattered himself, that his well-known liberality, and the majesty of the Roman name, which had already delivered him from two invasions, would dissipate with the same facility the rebellious army of Gaul. The officers of experience and ability, who had served under the banners of Maximian, were at length compelled to inform his effeminate son of the imminent danger to which he was reduced; and, with a freedom that at once surprised and convinced him, to urge the necessity of preventing his ruin, by a vigorous exertion of his remaining power. The resources of Maxentius, both of men and money, were still considerable. The Prætorian guards felt how strongly their own interest and safety were connected with his cause; and a third army was soon collected, more numerous than those which had been lost in the battles of Turin and Verona. It was far from the intention of the emperor to lead his troops in person. A stranger to the exercises of war, he trembled at the apprehension of so dangerous a contest; and as fear is commonly superstitious, he listened with melancholy attention to the rumours of omens and presages which seemed to menace his life and empire. Shame at length supplied the place of courage, and forced him to take the field. He was unable to sustain the

⁶² The Marquis Maffei has made it extremely probable that Constantine was still at Verona, the 1st of September, A. D. 312, and that the memorable æra of the indictions was dated from his conquest of the Cisalpine Gaul.

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contempt of the Roman people. The circus resounded with their indignant clamours, and they tumultuously besieged the gates of the palace, reproaching the pusillanimity of their indolent sovereign, and celebrating the heroic spirit of Constantine⁶³. Before Maxentius left Rome, he consulted the Sibylline books. The guardians of these ancient oracles were as well versed in the arts of this world, as they were ignorant of the secrets of fate; and they returned him a very prudent answer, which might adapt itself to the event, and secure their reputation whatever should be the chance of arms⁶⁴.

Victory of
Constantine near
Rome.
A. D. 312.
28th Oct.

The celerity of Constantine's march has been compared to the rapid conquest of Italy by the first of the Cæsars; nor is the flattering parallel repugnant to the truth of history, since no more than fifty-eight days elapsed between the surrender of Verona and the final decision of the war. Constantine had always apprehended that the tyrant would consult the dictates of fear, and perhaps of prudence; and that, instead of risking his last hopes in a general engagement, he would shut himself up within the walls of Rome. His ample magazines secured him against the danger of famine; and as the situation of Constantine admitted not of delay, he might have been reduced to the sad necessity of destroying with fire and sword the Imperial city, the noblest reward of his victory, and the deliverance of

⁶³ See Panegy. Vet. xi. 16. Lactantius de M. P. c. 44.

⁶⁴ Illo die hostem Romanorum esse perituro. The vanquished prince became of course the enemy of Rome.

which

which had been the motive, or rather indeed the pretence, of the civil war ⁶⁵. It was with equal surprise and pleasure, that on his arrival at a place called Saxa Rubra, about nine miles from Rome ⁶⁶, he discovered the army of Maxentius prepared to give him battle ⁶⁷. Their long front filled a very spacious plain, and their deep array reached to the banks of the Tyber, which covered their rear, and forbade their retreat. We are informed, and we may believe, that Constantine disposed his troops with consummate skill, and that he chose for himself the post of honour and danger. Distinguished by the splendour of his arms, he charged in person the cavalry of his rival; and his irresistible attack determined the fortune of the day. The cavalry of Maxentius was principally composed either of unwieldy cuirassiers, or of light Moors and Numidians. They yielded to the vigour of the Gallic horse, which possessed more activity than the one, more firmness than the other. The defeat of the two wings left the infantry without any protection on

⁶⁵ See Panegy. Vet. ix. 16. x. 27. The former of these orators magnifies the boards of corn, which Maxentius had collected from Africa and the Islands. And yet, if there is any truth in the scarcity mentioned by Eusebius (in Vit. Constantin. l. i. c. 36.), the Imperial granaries must have been open only to the soldiers.

⁶⁶ Maxentius . . . tandem urbe in Saxa Rubra, millia ferme novem ægerrime progressus. Aurelius Victor. See Cellarius Geograph. Antiq. tom. i. p. 463. Saxa Rubra was in the neighbourhood of the Crenera, a trifling rivulet, illustrated by the valour and glorious death of the three hundred Fabii.

⁶⁷ The post which Maxentius had taken, with the Tyber in his rear, is very clearly described by the two Panegyrist, ix. 16. x. 28.

its flanks, and the undisciplined Italians fled without reluctance from the standard of a tyrant whom they had always hated, and whom they no longer feared. The Prætorians, conscious that their offences were beyond the reach of mercy, were animated by revenge and despair. Notwithstanding their repeated efforts, those brave veterans were unable to recover the victory: they obtained, however, an honourable death; and it was observed that their bodies covered the same ground which had been occupied by their ranks⁶⁸. The confusion then became general, and the dismayed troops of Maxentius, pursued by an implacable enemy, rushed by thousands into the deep and rapid stream of the Tyber. The emperor himself attempted to escape back into the city over the Milvian bridge, but the crowds which pressed together through that narrow passage, forced him into the river, where he was immediately drowned by the weight of his armour⁶⁹. His body, which had sunk very deep into the mud, was found with some

⁶⁸ *Exceptis latrocinii illius primis auctoribus, qui desperatâ veniâ, locum quem pugnae sumperant texere corporibus.* Panegyr. Vet. x. 17.

⁶⁹ A very idle rumour soon prevailed, that Maxentius, who had not taken any precaution for his own retreat, had contrived a very artful snare to destroy the army of the pursuers; but that the wooden bridge which was to have been loosened on the approach of Constantine, unluckily broke down under the weight of the flying Italians. M. de Tillemont (*Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. part i. p. 576.) very seriously examines whether, in contradiction to common sense, the testimony of Usebius and Zosimus ought to prevail over the silence of Lactantius, Nazarius, and the anonymous, but contemporary orator, who composed the ninth panegyric.

difficulty

difficulty the next day. The sight of his head, when it was exposed to the eyes of the people, convinced them of their deliverance, and admonished them to receive, with acclamations of loyalty and gratitude, the fortunate Constantine, who thus achieved by his valour and ability the most splendid enterprize of his life⁷⁰.

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His reception,

In the use of victory, Constantine neither deserved the praise of clemency, nor incurred the censure of immoderate rigour⁷¹. He inflicted the same treatment, to which a defeat would have exposed his own person and family, put to death the two sons of the tyrant, and carefully extirpated his whole race. The most distinguished adherents of Maxentius must have expected to share his fate, as they had shared his prosperity and his crimes; but when the Roman people loudly demanded a greater number of victims, the conqueror resisted, with firmness and humanity, those servile clamours, which were dictated by flattery as well as by resentment. Informers were punished and discouraged; the innocent, who had suffered under the late tyranny, were recalled from exile, and restored to their estates.

⁷⁰ Zosimus, l. ii. p. 86—88, and the two Panegyrics, the former of which was pronounced a few months afterwards, afford the clearest notion of this great battle. Lactantius, Eusebius, and even the Epitomes, supply several useful hints.

⁷¹ Zosimus, the enemy of Constantine, allows (l. ii. p. 88.), that only a few of the friends of Maxentius were put to death; but we may remark the expressive passage of Nazarius (Panegy. Vet. x. 6.), Omnibus qui labefactari statum ejus poterant cum stirpe deletis. The other orator (Panegy. Vet. ix. 20, 21.) contents himself with observing, that Constantine, when he entered Rome, did not imitate the cruel massacres of Cinna, of Marius, or of Sylla.

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A general act of oblivion quieted the minds and settled the property of the people, both in Italy and in Africa⁷⁵. The first time that Constantine honoured the senate with his presence, he recapitulated his own services and exploits in a modest oration, assured that illustrious order of his sincere regard, and promised to re-establish its ancient dignity and privileges. The grateful senate repaid these unmeaning professions by the empty titles of honour, which it was yet in their power to bestow; and without presuming to ratify the authority of Constantine, they passed a decree to assign him the first rank among the three *Augusti*, who governed the Roman world⁷⁶. Games and festivals were instituted to preserve the fame of his victory, and several edifices raised at the expence of Maxentius, were dedicated to the honour of his successful rival. The triumphal arch of Constantine still remains a melancholy proof of the decline of the arts, and a singular testimony of the meanest vanity. As it was not possible to find in the capital of the empire a sculptor who was capable of adorning that public monument; the arch of Trajan, without any respect either for his memory or for the rules of propriety, was stripped of its most elegant figures. The difference of times and persons, of actions and characters, was totally disregarded. The

⁷⁵ See the two Panegyrics, and the laws of this and the ensuing year, in the Theodosian Code.

⁷⁶ Panegy. Ve. x. 20. Lactantius de M. P. c. 44. Maximin, who was confessedly the eldest Cæsar, claimed, with some shew of reason, the first rank among the *Augusti*.

Parthian

Parthian captives appear prostrate at the feet of a prince who never carried his arms beyond the Euphrates; and curious antiquarians can still discover the head of Trajan on the trophies of Constantine. The new ornaments which it was necessary to introduce between the vacancies of ancient sculpture, are executed in the rudest and most unskilful manner ⁷⁴.

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The final abolition of the Prætorian guards was a measure of prudence as well as of revenge. Those haughty troops, whose numbers and privileges had been restored, and even augmented, by Maxentius, were for ever suppressed by Constantine. Their fortified camp was destroyed, and the few Prætorians who had escaped the fury of the sword, were dispersed among the legions, and banished to the frontiers of the empire, where they might be serviceable without again becoming dangerous ⁷⁵. By suppressing the troops which were usually stationed in Rome, Constantine gave the fatal blow to the dignity of the senate and people, and the disarmed capital was exposed without protection to the insults or neglect of its distant master. We may observe, that in this last effort to preserve their expiring

and con-
duct at
Rome.

⁷⁴ *Adhuc cuncta opera quæ magnifice construxerat, urbis sanum, atque basilicam, Flavii meritis patres sacravere. Aurelius Victor.* With regard to the theft of Trajan's trophies, consult Flaminio Vacca, apud Montfaucon, *Diarium Italicum*, p. 250, and *l'Antiquité Expliquée* of the latter, tom. iv. p. 171.

⁷⁵ *Prætoriarum legiones ac subsidia factionibus aptiora quam urbi Romæ, sublata penitus; simul arma atque usus indumenti militaris. Aurelius Victor. Zosimus (l. ii. p. 39.) mentions this fact as an historian, and it is very pompously celebrated in the ninth Panegyric.*
freedom,

freedom, the Romans, from the apprehension of a tribute, had raised Maxentius to the throne. He exacted that tribute from the senate under the name of a free gift. They implored the assistance of Constantine. He vanquished the tyrant, and converted the free gift into a perpetual tax. The senators, according to the declaration which was required of their property, were divided into several classes. The most opulent paid annually eight pounds of gold, the next class paid four, the last two, and those whose poverty might have claimed an exemption, were assessed however at seven pieces of gold. Besides the regular members of the senate, their sons, their descendants, and even their relations, enjoyed the vain privileges, and supported the heavy burdens, of the senatorial order; nor will it any longer excite our surprise, that Constantine should be attentive to increase the number of persons who were included under so useful a description⁷⁶. After the defeat of Maxentius, the victorious emperor passed no more than two or three months in Rome, which he visited twice during the remainder of his life, to celebrate the solemn festivals of the tenth and of the twentieth years of his age. Constantine was almost

⁷⁶ Ex omnibus provinciis optimates viros Curiae tuae pigneraveris; ut Senatûs dignitas . . . ex totius Orbis flore consisteret. Nazarius in Panegyri. Vet. x. 35. The word *pigneraveris* might almost seem maliciously chosen. Concerning the senatorial tax, see Zosimus, l. ii. p. 113. the second title of the sixth book of the Theodosian Code, with Godefroy's Commentary, and Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxviii. p. 716.

perpe-

perpetually in motion to exercise the legions, or to inspect the state of the provinces. Treves, Milan, Aquileia, Sirmium, Naissus, and Thessalonica, were the occasional places of his residence, till he founded a NEW ROME on the confines of Europe and Asia ⁷⁷.

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Before Constantine marched into Italy, he had secured the friendship, or at least the neutrality, of Licinius, the Illyrian emperor. He had promised his sister Constantia in marriage to that prince; but the celebration of the nuptials was deferred till after the conclusion of the war, and the interview of the two emperors at Milan, which was appointed for that purpose, appeared to cement the union of their families and interests ⁷⁸. In the midst of the public festivity they were suddenly obliged to take leave of each other. An inroad of the Franks summoned Constantine to the Rhine, and the hostile approach of the sovereign of Asia demanded the immediate presence of Licinius. Maximin had been the secret ally of Maxentius, and without being discouraged by his fate, he resolved to try the fortune of a civil war. He moved out of Syria towards the frontiers of Bithynia in

His alliance with
Licinius.
A.D. 313.
March.

War between
Maximin
and Licinius.
A.D. 313.

⁷⁷ From the Theodosian Code, we may now begin to trace the motions of the emperors: but the dates both of time and place have frequently been altered by the carelessness of transcribers.

⁷⁸ Zosimus (l. ii. p. 89.) observes, that before the war the sister of Constantine had been betrothed to Licinius. According to the younger Victor, Diocletian was invited to the nuptials; but having ventured to plead his age and infirmities, he received a second letter filled with reproaches for his supposed partiality to the cause of Maxentius and Maximin.

the

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The de-
feat,
April 30.

the depth of winter. The season was severe and tempestuous; great numbers of men as well as horses perished in the snow; and as the roads were broken up by incessant rains, he was obliged to leave behind him a considerable part of the heavy baggage, which was unable to follow the rapidity of his forced marches. By this extraordinary effort of diligence, he arrived, with a harassed but formidable army, on the banks of the Thracian Bosphorus, before the lieutenants of Licinius were apprised of his hostile intentions. Byzantium surrendered to the power of Maximin, after a siege of eleven days. He was detained some days under the walls of Heraclea; and he had no sooner taken possession of that city, than he was alarmed by the intelligence, that Licinius had pitched his camp at the distance of only eighteen miles. After a fruitless negotiation, in which the two princes attempted to seduce the fidelity of each other's adherents, they had recourse to arms. The emperor of the East commanded a disciplined and veteran army of above seventy thousand men, and Licinius, who had collected about thirty thousand Illyrians, was at first oppressed by the superiority of numbers. His military skill, and the firmness of his troops, restored the day, and obtained a decisive victory. The incredible speed which Maximin exerted in his flight, is much more celebrated than his prowess in the battle. Twenty-four hours afterwards he was seen, pale, trembling, and without his Imperial ornaments, at Nicomedia, one hundred and sixty miles from the place

place of his defeat. The wealth of Asia was yet unexhausted; and though the flower of his veterans had fallen in the late action, he had still power, if he could obtain time, to draw very numerous levies from Syria and Egypt. But he survived his misfortune only three or four months. His death, which happened at Tarsus, was variously ascribed to despair, to poison, and to the divine justice. As Maximin was alike destitute of abilities and of virtue, he was lamented neither by the people nor by the soldiers. The provinces of the East, delivered from the terrors of civil war, cheerfully acknowledged the authority of Licinius⁷⁹.

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and death
of the
former.
August.

The vanquished emperor left behind him two children, a boy of about eight, and a girl of about seven, years old. Their inoffensive age might have excited compassion, but the compassion of Licinius was a very feeble resource, nor did it restrain him from *extinguishing* the name and memory of his adversary. The death of Severianus will admit of less excuse, as it was dictated neither by revenge nor by policy. The conqueror had never received any injury from the father of that unhappy youth, and the short and obscure reign of Severus in a distant part of the empire was already forgotten. But the execution of Candidianus was an act of the blackest cruelty and ingratitude. He was the natural son

Cruelty of
Licinius.

⁷⁹ Zosimus mentions the defeat and death of Maximin as ordinary events; but Lactantius expatiates on them (de M. P. c. 45—50.), ascribing them to the miraculous interposition of Heaven. Licinius at that time was one of the protectors of the church.

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Unfortunate fate of the empress Valeria and her mother.

of Galerius, the friend and benefactor of Licinius. The prudent father had judged him too young to sustain the weight of a diadem; but he hoped that under the protection of princes, who were indebted to his favour for the Imperial purple, Candidianus might pass a secure and honourable life. He was now advancing towards the twentieth year of his age, and the royalty of his birth, though unsupported either by merit or ambition, was sufficient to exasperate the jealous mind of Licinius⁸⁰. To these innocent and illustrious victims of his tyranny, we must add the wife and daughter of the emperor Diocletian. When that prince conferred on Galerius the title of Cæsar, he had given him in marriage his daughter Valeria, whose melancholy adventures might furnish a very singular subject for tragedy. She had fulfilled and even surpassed the duties of a wife. As she had not any children herself, she condescended to adopt the illegitimate son of her husband, and invariably displayed towards the unhappy Candidianus the tenderness and anxiety of a real mother. After the death of Galerius, her ample possessions provoked the avarice, and her personal attractions excited the desires, of his successor Maximin⁸¹. He had a wife still alive, but

⁸⁰ Lactantius de M. P. c. 50. Aurelius Victor touches on the different conduct of Licinius, and of Constantine, in the use of victory.

⁸¹ The sensual appetites of Maximin were gratified at the expense of his subjects. His eunuchs, who forced away wives and virgins, examined their naked charms with anxious curiosity, lest any part of their body should be found unworthy of the royal embraces. Coy-
ness

but divorce was permitted by the Roman law, and the fierce passions of the tyrant demanded an immediate gratification. The answer of Valeria was such as became the daughter and widow of emperors; but it was tempered by the prudence which her defenceless condition compelled her to observe. She represented to the persons whom Maximin had employed on this occasion, "that even if honour could permit a woman of her character and dignity to entertain a thought of second nuptials, decency at least must forbid her to listen to his addresses at a time when the ashes of her husband and his benefactor were still warm; and while the sorrows of her mind were still expressed by her mourning garments. She ventured to declare, that she could place very little confidence in the professions of a man, whose cruel inconstancy was capable of repudiating a faithful and affectionate wife". On this repulse, the love of Maximin was converted into fury, and as witnesses and judges were always at his disposal, it was easy for him to cover his fury with an appearance of legal proceedings, and to assault the reputation as well as the happiness of Valeria. Her estates were confiscated, her eunuchs and domestics devoted to the most inhuman tortures,

and self and disdain were considered as treason, and the obstinate fair-one was condemned to be drowned. A custom was gradually introduced, that no person should marry a wife without the permission of the emperor, "ut ipse in omnibus nuptiis prægustator esset." Lactantius de M. P. c. 38.

³⁸ Lactantius de M. P. c. 39.

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and several innocent and respectable matrons, who were honoured with her friendship, suffered death, on a false accusation of adultery. The empress herself, together with her mother Prisca, was condemned to exile; and as they were ignominiously hurried from place to place before they were confined to a sequestered village in the deserts of Syria, they exposed their shame and distress to the provinces of the East, which, during thirty years, had respected their august dignity. Diocletian made several ineffectual efforts to alleviate the misfortunes of his daughter; and, as the last return that he expected for the Imperial purple, which he had conferred upon Maximin, he entreated that Valeria might be permitted to share his retirement of Salona, and to close the eyes of her afflicted father⁸³. He entreated, but as he could no longer threaten, his prayers were received with coldness and disdain; and the pride of Maximin was gratified, in treating Diocletian as a suppliant, and his daughter as a criminal. The death of Maximin seemed to assure the empresses of a favourable alteration in their fortune. The public disorders relaxed the vigilance of their guard, and they easily found means to escape from the place of their exile, and to repair, though with some precaution, and in disguise, to the court of Licinius. His behaviour, in the first days of his

⁸³ Diocletian at last sent cognatum suum, quendam militem ac potentem virum, to intercede in favour of his daughter (Lactantius de M. P. c. 41.). We are not sufficiently acquainted with the history of these times, to point out the person who was employed.

reign,

reign, and the honourable reception which he gave to young Candidianus, inspired Valeria with a secret satisfaction, both on her own account, and on that of her adopted son. But these grateful prospects were soon succeeded by horror and astonishment, and the bloody executions which stained the palace of Nicomedia, sufficiently convinced her, that the throne of Maximin was filled by a tyrant more inhuman than himself. Valeria consulted her safety by a hasty flight, and, still accompanied by her mother Prisca, they wandered above fifteen months ²⁴ through the provinces, concealed in the disguise of plebeian habits. They were at length discovered at Thessalonica; and as the sentence of their death was already pronounced, they were immediately beheaded, and their bodies thrown into the sea. The people gazed on the melancholy spectacle; but their grief and indignation were suppressed by the terrors of a military guard. Such was the unworthy fate of the wife and daughter of Diocletian. We lament their misfortunes, we cannot discover their crimes, and whatever idea we may justly entertain of the cruelty of Licinius, it remains a matter of surprise,

²⁴ Valeria quoque per varias provincias quindecim mensibus plebeio cultu pervagata. Lactantius de M. P. c. 51. There is some doubt whether we should compute the fifteen months from the moment of her exile, or from that of her escape. The expression of *pervagata* seems to denote the latter; but in that case we must suppose, that the treatise of Lactantius was written after the first civil war between Licinius and Constantine. See Cuper, p. 254.

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Quarrel
between
Constantine and
Licinius.
A.D. 314.

that he was not contented with some more secret and decent method of revenge ⁸⁵.

The Roman world was now divided between Constantine and Licinius, the former of whom was master of the West, and the latter of the East. It might perhaps have been expected that the conquerors, fatigued with civil war, and connected by a private as well as public alliance, would have renounced, or at least would have suspended, any farther designs of ambition. And yet a year had scarcely elapsed after the death of Maximin, before the victorious emperors turned their arms against each other. The genius, the success, and the aspiring temper, of Constantine, may seem to mark him out as the aggressor; but the perfidious character of Licinius justifies the most unfavourable suspicions, and by the faint light which history reflects on this transaction ⁸⁶, we may discover a conspiracy fomented by his arts against the authority of his colleague. Constantine had lately given his sister Anastasia in marriage to Bassianus, a man of a considerable family and fortune, and had elevated his new kinsman to the rank of Cæsar. According to the system of government instituted by Diocletian, Italy, and perhaps Africa, were designed

⁸⁵ Ita illis pudicitia et conditio exitio fuit. Lactantius de M. P. c. 51. He relates the misfortunes of the innocent wife and daughter of Diocletian with a very natural mixture of pity and exultation.

⁸⁶ The curious reader, who consults the Valeſian Fragment, p. 713, will perhaps accuse me of giving a bold and licentious paraphrase; but if he considers it with attention, he will acknowledge that my interpretation is probable and consistent.

for

for his departments in the empire. But the performance of the promised favour was either attended with so much delay, or accompanied with so many unequal conditions, that the fidelity of Bassianus was alienated rather than secured by the honourable distinction which he had obtained. His nomination had been ratified by the consent of Licinius, and that artful prince, by the means of his emissaries, soon contrived to enter into a secret and dangerous correspondence with the new Cæsar, to irritate his discontents, and to urge him to the rash enterprise of extorting by violence what he might in vain solicit from the justice of Constantine. But the vigilant emperor discovered the conspiracy before it was ripe for execution; and, after solemnly renouncing the alliance of Bassianus, despoiled him of the purple, and inflicted the deserved punishment on his treason and ingratitude. The haughty refusal of Licinius, when he was required to deliver up the criminals, who had taken refuge in his dominions, confirmed the suspicions already entertained of his perfidy; and the indignities offered at Æmona, on the frontiers of Italy, to the statues of Constantine, became the signal of discord between the two princes²⁷.

The first battle was fought near Cibalis, a city of Pannonia, situated on the river Save, about

First civil
war be-
tween
them.

²⁷ The situation of Æmona, or as it is now called, Laybach, in Carniola (d'Anville *Geographie Ancienne*, tom. i. p. 187.), may suggest a conjecture. As it lay to the north-east of the Julian Alps, that important territory became a natural object of dispute between the sovereigns of Italy and of Illyricum.

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XIV.

Battle of
Cibalæ.

A. D. 315.
8th Oct.

fifty miles above Sirmium²². From the inconsiderable forces which in this important contest two such powerful monarchs brought into the field, it may be inferred, that the one was suddenly provoked, and that the other was unexpectedly surprised. The emperor of the West had only twenty thousand, and the sovereign of the East no more than five and thirty thousand men. The inferiority of number was, however, compensated by the advantage of the ground. Constantine had taken post in a defile about half a mile in breadth, between a steep hill and a deep morass, and in that situation he steadily expected and repulsed the first attack of the enemy. He pursued his success, and advanced into the plain. But the veteran legions of Illyricum rallied under the standard of a leader who had been trained to arms in the school of Probus and Diocletian. The missile weapons on both sides were soon exhausted; the two armies, with equal valour, rushed to a closer engagement of swords and spears, and the doubtful contest had already lasted from the dawn of the day to a late hour of the evening, when the right wing, which Constantine led in person, made a vigorous and decisive charge. The judicious retreat of Licinius saved

²² Cibalæ or Cibalæ (whose name is still preserved in the obscure ruins of Swilei) was situated about fifty miles from Sirmium, the capital of Illyricum, and about one hundred from Taurenun, or Belgrade, and the conflux of the Danube and the Save. The Roman garrisons and cities on those rivers are finely illustrated by M. d'Anville, in a memoir inserted in l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxviii.

the

the remainder of his troops from a total defeat; but when he computed his loss, which amounted to more than twenty thousand men, he thought it unsafe to pass the night in the presence of an active and victorious enemy. Abandoning his camp and magazines, he marched away with secrecy and diligence at the head of the greatest part of his cavalry, and was soon removed beyond the danger of a pursuit. His diligence preserved his wife, his son, and his treasures, which he had deposited at Sirmium. Licinius passed through that city, and breaking down the bridge on the Save, hastened to collect a new army in Dacia and Thrace. In his flight he bestowed the precarious title of Cæsar on Valens, his general of the Illyrian frontier⁸⁹.

The plain of Mardia in Thrace was the theatre of a second battle no less obstinate and bloody than the former. The troops on both sides displayed the same valour and discipline; and the victory was once more decided by the superior abilities of Constantine, who directed a body of five thousand men to gain an advantageous height, from whence, during the heat of the action, they attacked the rear of the enemy, and made a very considerable slaughter. The troops of Licinius, however, presenting a double front, still maintained their ground, till the approach of night put an end to the combat, and secured their re-

Battle of
Mardia,

⁸⁹ Zosimus (l. ii. p. 90, 91.) gives a very particular account of this battle; but the descriptions of Zosimus are rhetorical rather than military.

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treat towards the mountains of Macedonia⁹⁰. The loss of two battles, and of his bravest veterans, reduced the fierce spirit of Licinius to sue for peace. His ambassador Mistrianus was admitted to the audience of Constantine; he expatiated on the common topics of moderation and humanity, which are so familiar to the eloquence of the vanquished; represented, in the most insinuating language, that the event of the war was still doubtful, whilst its inevitable calamities were alike pernicious to both the contending parties; and declared, that he was authorised to propose a lasting and honourable peace in the name of the *two* emperors his masters. Constantine received the mention of Valens with indignation and contempt. "It was not for such a purpose," he sternly replied, "that we have advanced from the shores of the western ocean in an uninterrupted course of combats and victories, that, after rejecting an ungrateful kinsman, we should accept for our colleague a contemptible slave. The abdication of Valens is the first article of the treaty⁹¹."

⁹⁰ Zosimus, l. ii. p. 92, 93. Anonym. Valelian. p. 713. The Epitomes furnish some circumstances; but they frequently confound the two wars between Licinius and Constantine.

⁹¹ Petrus Patricius in Excerpt. Legat. p. 27. If it should be thought that γαμβρος signifies more properly a son-in-law, we might conjecture, that Constantine, assuming the name as well as the duties of a father, had adopted his younger brothers and sisters, the children of Theodora. But in the best authors γαμβρος sometimes signifies a husband, sometimes a father-in-law, and sometimes a kinsman in general. See Spanheim Observat. ad Julian. Orat. i. p. 72.

It

It was necessary to accept this humiliating condition, and the unhappy Valens, after a reign of a few days, was deprived of the purple and of his life. As soon as this obstacle was removed, the tranquillity of the Roman world was easily restored. The successive defeats of Licinius had ruined his forces, but they had displayed his courage and abilities. His situation was almost desperate, but the efforts of despair are sometimes formidable; and the good sense of Constantine preferred a great and certain advantage to a third trial of the chance of arms. He consented to leave his rival, or, as he again styled Licinius, his friend and brother, in the possession of Thrace, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt; but the provinces of Pannonia, Dalmatia, Dacia, Macedonia, and Greece, were yielded to the western empire, and the dominions of Constantine now extended from the confines of Caledonia to the extremity of Peloponnesus. It was stipulated by the same treaty, that three royal youths, the sons of the emperors, should be called to the hopes of the succession. Crispus and the young Constantine were soon afterwards declared Cæsars in the West, while the younger Licinius was invested with the same dignity in the East. In this double proportion of honours, the conqueror asserted the superiority of his arms and power⁹².

Treaty of
peace.
December.

The

⁹² Zosimus, l. ii. p. 93. Anonym. Valefian. p. 713. Eutropius, x. 5. Aurelius Victor, Euseb. in Chrou. Sozomen, l. i. c. 2. Four of these writers affirm that the promotion of the Cæsars was an article of

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General
peace and
laws of
Constantine.

A.D. 315.
— 323.

The reconciliation of Constantine and Licinius, though it was embittered by resentment and jealousy, by the remembrance of recent injuries, and by the apprehension of future dangers, maintained, however, above eight years, the tranquillity of the Roman world. As a very regular series of the Imperial laws commences about this period, it would not be difficult to transcribe the civil regulations which employed the leisure of Constantine. But the most important of his institutions are intimately connected with the new system of policy and religion, which was not perfectly established till the last and peaceful years of his reign. There are many of his laws, which, as far as they concern the rights and property of individuals, and the practice of the bar, are more properly referred to the private than to the public jurisprudence of the empire; and he published many edicts of so local and temporary a nature, that they would ill deserve the notice of a general history. Two laws, however, may be selected from the crowd; the one for its importance, the other for its singularity; the former for its remarkable benevolence, the latter for its excessive severity. 1. The horrid practice, so familiar to the ancients, of exposing or murdering their new-born infants, was be-

of the treaty. It is however certain, that the younger Constantine and Licinius were not yet born; and it is highly probable that the promotion was made the 1st of March, A.D. 317. The treaty had probably stipulated that two Cæsars might be created by the western, and one only by the eastern emperor; but each of them reserved to himself the choice of the persons.

come,

come every day more frequent in the provinces, and especially in Italy. It was the effect of distress; and the distress was principally occasioned by the intolerable burden of taxes, and by the vexatious as well as cruel prosecutions of the officers of the revenue against their insolvent debtors. The less opulent or less industrious part of mankind, instead of rejoicing in an increase of family, deemed it an act of paternal tenderness to release their children from the impending miseries of a life which they themselves were unable to support. The humanity of Constantine, moved, perhaps, by some recent and extraordinary instances of despair, engaged him to address an edict to all the cities of Italy, and afterwards of Africa, directing immediate and sufficient relief to be given to those parents who should produce before the magistrates the children whom their own poverty would not allow them to educate. But the promise was too liberal, and the provision too vague, to effect any general or permanent benefit⁹³. The law, though it may merit some praise, served rather to display than to alleviate the public distress. It still remains an authentic monument to contradict and confound those venal orators, who were too well satisfied with their own situation to discover either vice or misery under the government of a generous sovereign⁹⁴. 2. The laws of Constantine

⁹³ Codex Theodosian. l. xi. tit. 27. tom. iv. p. 188. with Godefroy's observations. See likewise, l. v. tit. 7—8.

⁹⁴ *Omnia foris placita, domi prospera, annonæ ubertate, fructuum copîâ, &c.* Panegy. Vet. x. 38. This oration of Nazarius was pronounced

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tine against rapes were dictated with very little indulgence for the most amiable weaknesses of human nature; since the description of that crime was applied not only to the brutal violence which compelled, but even to the gentle seduction which might persuade, an unmarried woman, under the age of twenty-five, to leave the house of her parents. “ The successful ravisher “ was punished with death; and as if simple “ death was inadequate to the enormity of his “ guilt, he was either burnt alive, or torn in “ pieces by wild beasts in the amphitheatre. “ The virgin’s declaration that she had been carried away with her own consent, instead of “ saving her lover, exposed her to share his fate. “ The duty of a public prosecution was intrusted “ to the parents of the guilty or unfortunate “ maid; and if the sentiments of Nature prevailed on them to dissemble the injury, and “ to repair by a subsequent marriage the honour “ of their family, they were themselves punished “ by exile and confiscation. The slaves, whether male or female, who were convicted of “ having been accessory to the rape or seduction, “ were burnt alive, or put to death by the ingenious torture of pouring down their throats “ a quantity of melted lead. As the crime was “ of a public kind, the accusation was permitted “ even to strangers. The commencement of “ the action was not limited to any term of “ years, and the consequences of the sentence

pronounced on the day of the Quinquennalia of the Cæsars, the 1st of March, A. D. 321.

“ were extended to the innocent offspring of
 “ such an irregular union ⁹⁵.” But whenever
 the offence inspires less horror than the punish-
 ment, the rigour of penal law is obliged to give
 way to the common feelings of mankind. The
 most odious parts of this edict were softened or
 repealed in the subsequent reigns ⁹⁶; and even
 Constantine himself very frequently alleviated,
 by partial acts of mercy, the stern temper of his
 general institutions. Such, indeed, was the sin-
 gular humour of that emperor, who shewed him-
 self as indulgent, and even remiss, in the execu-
 tion of his laws, as he was severe, and even cruel,
 in the enacting of them. It is scarcely possible to
 observe a more decisive symptom of weakness, either
 in the character of the prince, or in the constitution
 of the government ⁹⁷.

The civil administration was sometimes inter-
 rupted by the military defence of the empire.
 Crispus, a youth of the most amiable character,
 who had received with the title of Cæsar the
 command of the Rhine, distinguished his con-
 duct, as well as valour, in several victories over
 the Franks and Alemanni; and taught the bar-

The Go-
 thic war.
 A. D. 323.

⁹⁵ See the edict of Constantine, addressed to the Roman people, in the Theodosian Code, l. ix. tit. 24. tom. iii. p. 189.

⁹⁶ His son very fairly assigns the true reason of the repeal, “ Ne sub
 “ specie atrocioris judicii aliqua in ulciscendo crimine dilatio nascere-
 “ tur.” Cod. Theod. tom. iii. p. 193.

⁹⁷ Eusebius (in *Vita Constant.* l. iii. c. 1.) chooses to affirm, that
 in the reign of this hero, the sword of justice hung idle in the hands of
 the magistrates. Eusebius himself (l. iv. c. 29. 34.) and the Theo-
 dosian Code will inform us, that this excessive lenity was not owing to
 the want either of atrocious criminals or of penal laws.

barians

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barians of that frontier to dread the eldest son of Constantine, and the grandson of Constantius⁹⁸. The emperor himself had assumed the more difficult and important province of the Danube. The Goths, who in the time of Claudius and Aurelian had felt the weight of the Roman arms, respected the power of the empire, even in the midst of its intestine divisions. But the strength of that warlike nation was now restored by a peace of near fifty years; a new generation had arisen, who no longer remembered the misfortunes of ancient days: the Sarmatians of the lake Mæotis followed the Gothic standard either as subjects or as allies, and their united force was poured upon the countries of Illyricum. Campagna, Margus, and Bononia, appear to have been the scenes of several memorable sieges and battles⁹⁹; and though Constantine encountered a very obstinate resistance, he prevailed at length in the contest, and the Goths were compelled to purchase an ignominious retreat, by restoring the booty and prisoners which they had taken. Nor was this advantage sufficient to satisfy the indignation of the emperor. He resolved to chastise as well as to repulse the insolent barbarians who

⁹⁸ Nazarius in Panegy. Vet. x. The victory of Crispus over the Alemanni, is expressed on some medals.

⁹⁹ See Zosimus, l. ii. p. 93, 94; though the narrative of that historian is neither clear nor consistent. The Panegyric of Optatianus (c. 23.) mentions the alliance of the Sarmatians with the Carpi and Getæ, and points out the several fields of battle. It is supposed, that the Sarmatian games, celebrated in the month of November, derived their origin from the success of this war.

had

had dared to invade the territories of Rome. At the head of his legions he passed the Danube, after repairing the bridge which had been constructed by Trajan, penetrated into the strongest recesses of Dacia¹⁰⁰, and when he had inflicted a severe revenge, condescended to give peace to the suppliant Goths, on condition that, as often as they were required, they should supply his armies with a body of forty thousand soldiers¹⁰¹. Exploits like these were no doubt honourable to Constantine, and beneficial to the state; but it may surely be questioned, whether they can justify the exaggerated assertion of Eusebius, that ALL SCYTHIA, as far as the extremity of the North, divided as it was into so many names and nations of the most various and savage manners, had been added by his victorious arms to the Roman empire¹⁰².

In this exalted state of glory it was impossible that Constantine should any longer endure a partner in the empire. Confiding in the superiority of his genius and military power, he determined, without any previous injury, to exert

Second civil war between Constantine and Licinius. A. D. 323.

¹⁰⁰ In the *Cæfars* of Julian (p. 329. *Commentaire de Spanheim*, p. 252.) Constantine boasts, that he had recovered the province (Dacia) which Trajan had subdued. But it is insinuated by Silenus, that the conquests of Constantine were like the gardens of Adonis, which fade and wither almost the moment they appear.

¹⁰¹ *Jornandes de Rebus Geticis*, c. 21. I know not whether we may entirely depend on his authority. Such an alliance has a very recent air, and scarcely is suited to the maxims of the beginning of the fourth century.

¹⁰² Eusebius in *Vit. Constantin.* l. i. c. 8. This passage, however, is taken from a general declamation on the greatness of Constantine, and not from any particular account of the Gothic war.

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them for the destruction of Licinius, whose advanced age and unpopular vices seemed to offer a very easy conquest¹⁰³. But the old emperor, awakened by the approaching danger, deceived the expectations of his friends as well as of his enemies. Calling forth that spirit and those abilities by which he had deserved the friendship of Galerius and the Imperial purple, he prepared himself for the contest, collected the forces of the East, and soon filled the plains of Hadrianople with his troops, and the Streights of the Hellespont with his fleet. The army consisted of one hundred and fifty thousand foot, and fifteen thousand horse; and as the cavalry was drawn, for the most part, from Phrygia and Cappadocia, we may conceive a more favourable opinion of the beauty of the horses, than of the courage and dexterity of their riders. The fleet was composed of three hundred and fifty galleys of three ranks of oars. An hundred and thirty of these were furnished by Egypt, and the adjacent coast of Africa. An hundred and ten sailed from the ports of Phœnicia and the isle of Cyprus; and the maritime countries of Bithynia, Ionia, and Caria, were likewise obliged to provide an hundred and ten galleys. The troops of Constantine were ordered to rendezvous at Thessalonica; they amounted to above an hundred

¹⁰³ Constantinus tamen, vir ingens, et omnia efficere nitens quæ animo præparasset, simul principatum totius orbis affectans, Licinio bellum intulit. Eutropius, x. 5. Zosimus, l. ii. p. 89. The reasons which they have assigned for the first civil war, may, with more propriety, be applied to the second.

and

and twenty thousand horse and foot¹⁰⁴. Their emperor was satisfied with their martial appearance, and his army contained more soldiers, though fewer men, than that of his eastern competitor. The legions of Constantine were levied in the warlike provinces of Europe; action had confirmed their discipline, victory had elevated their hopes, and there were among them a great number of veterans, who, after seventeen glorious campaigns under the same leader, prepared themselves to deserve an honourable dismissal by a last effort of their valour¹⁰⁵. But the naval preparations of Constantine were in every respect much inferior to those of Licinius. The maritime cities of Greece sent their respective quotas of men and ships to the celebrated harbour of Piræus, and their united forces consisted of no more than two hundred small vessels: a very feeble armament, if it is compared with those formidable fleets which were equipped and maintained by the republic of Athens during the Peloponnesian war¹⁰⁶. Since Italy was no longer

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¹⁰⁴ Zosimus, l. ii. p. 94, 95.

¹⁰⁵ Constantine was very attentive to the privileges and comforts of his fellow-veterans (*Conveterani*), as he now began to style them. See the Theodosian Code, l. vii. tit. 20. tom. ii. p. 419. 429.

¹⁰⁶ Whilst the Athenians maintained the empire of the sea, their fleet consisted of three, and afterwards of four, hundred galleys of three ranks of oars, all completely equipped and ready for immediate service. The arsenal in the port of Piræus had cost the republic a thousand talents; about two hundred and sixteen thousand pounds. See Thucydides de Bel. Pelopon. l. ii. c. 13. and Meursius de Fortuna Attica, c. 19.

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the seat of government, the naval establishments of Misenum and Ravenna had been gradually neglected; and as the shipping and mariners of the empire were supported by commerce rather than by war, it was natural that they should the most abound in the industrious provinces of Egypt and Asia. It is only surprising that the eastern emperor, who possessed so great a superiority at sea, should have neglected the opportunity of carrying an offensive war into the centre of his rival's dominions.

Battle of
Hadrian-
ople.
A. D. 323.
July 3.

Instead of embracing such an active resolution, which might have changed the whole face of the war, the prudent Licinius expected the approach of his rival in a camp near Hadrianople, which he had fortified with an anxious care that betrayed his apprehension of the event. Constantine directed his march from Thessalonica towards that part of Thrace, till he found himself stopped by the broad and rapid stream of the Hebrus, and discovered the numerous army of Licinius, which filled the steep ascent of the hill, from the river to the city of Hadrianople. Many days were spent in doubtful and distant skirmishes; but at length the obstacles of the passage and of the attack were removed by the intrepid conduct of Constantine. In this place we might relate a wonderful exploit of Constantine, which, though it can scarcely be paralleled either in poetry or romance, is celebrated, not by a venal orator devoted to his fortune, but by an historian, the partial enemy of his fame. We are assured

assured that the valiant emperor threw himself into the river Hebrus, accompanied only by *twelve* horsemen, and that by the effort or terror of his invincible arm, he broke, slaughtered, and put to flight a host of an hundred and fifty thousand men. The credulity of Zosimus prevailed so strongly over his passion, that among the events of the memorable battle of Hadrianople, he seems to have selected and embellished, not the most important, but the most marvellous. The valour and danger of Constantine are attested by a slight wound which he received in the thigh, but it may be discovered even from an imperfect narration, and perhaps a corrupted text, that the victory was obtained no less by the conduct of the general than by the courage of the hero; that a body of five thousand archers marched round to occupy a thick wood in the rear of the enemy, whose attention was diverted by the construction of a bridge, and that Licinius, perplexed by so many artful evolutions, was reluctantly drawn from his advantageous post to combat on equal ground in the plain. The contest was no longer equal. His confused multitude of new levies was easily vanquished by the experienced veterans of the West. Thirty-four thousand men are reported to have been slain. The fortified camp of Licinius was taken by assault the evening of the battle; the greater part of the fugitives, who had retired to the mountains, surrendered themselves the next day to the discretion of the conqueror; and his rival,

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who

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Siege of
Byzan-
tium, and
naval vic-
tory of
Crispus.

who could no longer keep the field, confined himself within the walls of Byzantium¹⁰⁷.

The siege of Byzantium, which was immediately undertaken by Constantine, was attended with great labour and uncertainty. In the late civil wars, the fortifications of that place, so justly considered as the key of Europe and Asia, had been repaired and strengthened; and as long as Licinius remained master of the sea, the garrison was much less exposed to the danger of famine than the army of the besiegers. The naval commanders of Constantine were summoned to his camp, and received his positive orders to force the passage of the Hellespont, as the fleet of Licinius, instead of seeking and destroying their feeble enemy, continued inactive in those narrow streights where its superiority of numbers was of little use or advantage. Crispus, the emperor's eldest son, was intrusted with the execution of this daring enterprise, which he performed with so much courage and success, that he deserved the esteem, and most probably excited the jealousy, of his father. The engagement lasted two days, and in the evening of the first, the contending fleets, after a considerable and mutual loss, retired into their respective harbours of Europe and Asia. The second day

¹⁰⁷ Zosimus, l. ii. p. 95, 96. This great battle is described in the Valesian fragment (p. 714.), in a clear though concise manner. "Licinius vero circum Hadrianopolin maximo exercitu latera ardui montis impleverat; illuc toto agmine Constantinus inflexit. Cum bellum terrâ marique traheretur, quamvis per arduum suis nitentibus, attamen disciplinâ militari et felicitate, Constantinus Licinii confusum et sine ordine agentem vicit exercitum; leviter seniore sauciatus."

about

about noon a strong south wind ¹⁰⁸ sprang up, which carried the vessels of Crispus against the enemy, and as the casual advantage was improved by his skilful intrepidity, he soon obtained a complete victory. An hundred and thirty vessels were destroyed, five thousand men were slain, and Amandus, the admiral of the Asiatic fleet, escaped with the utmost difficulty to the shores of Chalcedon. As soon as the Hellespont was open, a plentiful convoy of provisions flowed into the camp of Constantine, who had already advanced the operations of the siege. He constructed artificial mounds of earth of an equal height with the ramparts of Byzantium. The lofty towers which were erected on that foundation, galled the besieged with large stones and darts from the military engines, and the battering rams had shaken the walls in several places. If Licinius persisted much longer in the defence, he exposed himself to be involved in the ruin, of the place. Before he was surrounded he prudently removed his person and treasures to Chalcedon in Asia; and as he was always desirous of associating companions to the hopes and dangers of his fortune, he now bestowed the title of Cæsar on Martinianus, who exercised one of the most important offices of the empire ¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁸ Zosimus, l. ii. p. 97, 98. The current always sets out of the Hellespont; and when it is assisted by a north wind, no vessel can attempt the passage. A south wind renders the force of the current almost imperceptible. See Tournefort's *Voyage au Levant*, Let. xi.

¹⁰⁹ Aurelius Victor. Zosimus, l. ii. p. 98. According to the latter, Martinianus was *Magister Officiorum* (he uses the Latin appellation in Greek). Some medals seem to intimate, that during his short reign he received the title of Augustus.

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Battle of
Chrysopolis.

Submission
and death
of Licinius.

Such were still the resources, and such the abilities, of Licinius, that, after so many successive defeats, he collected in Bithynia a new army of fifty or sixty thousand men, while the activity of Constantine was employed in the siege of Byzantium. The vigilant emperor did not however neglect the last struggles of his antagonist. A considerable part of his victorious army was transported over the Bosphorus in small vessels, and the decisive engagement was fought soon after their landing on the heights of Chrysopolis, or, as it is now called, of Scutari. The troops of Licinius, though they were lately raised, ill armed, and worse disciplined, made head against their conquerors with fruitless but desperate valour, till a total defeat, and the slaughter of five and twenty thousand men, irretrievably determined the fate of their leader¹¹⁰. He retired to Nicomedia, rather with the view of gaining some time for negociation, than with the hope of any effectual defence. Constantia, his wife and the sister of Constantine, interceded with her brother in favour of her husband, and obtained from his policy rather than from his compassion, a solemn promise, confirmed by an oath, that after the sacrifice of Martinianus, and the resignation of the purple, Licinius himself should be permitted to pass the remainder of his life in peace and affluence. The behaviour of Constantia, and her relation to the contending parties, naturally

¹¹⁰ Eusebius (in *Vita Constantini*. l. ii. c. 16, 17.) ascribes this decisive victory to the pious prayers of the emperor. The *Valesian fragment* (p. 714.) mentions a body of Gothic auxiliaries, under their chief Aliquaca, who adhered to the party of Licinius.

recals

recalls the remembrance of that virtuous matron who was the sister of Augustus, and the wife of Antony. But the temper of mankind was altered, and it was no longer esteemed infamous for a Roman to survive his honour and independence. Licinius solicited and accepted the pardon of his offences, laid himself and his purple at the feet of his *lord* and *master*, was raised from the ground with insulting pity, was admitted the same day to the Imperial banquet, and soon afterwards was sent away to Thessalonica, which had been chosen for the place of his confinement¹¹¹. His confinement was soon terminated by death, and it is doubtful whether a tumult of the soldiers, or a decree of the senate, was suggested as a motive for his execution. According to the rules of tyranny, he was accused of forming a conspiracy, and of holding a treasonable correspondence with the barbarians; but as he was never convicted, either by his own conduct or by any legal evidence, we may perhaps be allowed, from his weakness, to presume his innocence¹¹². The memory of Licinius was branded with infamy, his statues were thrown down, and, by a hasty edict, of such mischievous

¹¹¹ Zosimus, l. ii. p. 102. Victor Junior in Epitome. Anonym. Valesian. p. 714.

¹¹² Contra religionem sacramenti Thessalonice privatus occisus est. Eutropius, x. 6. and his evidence is confirmed by Jerome (in Chronic.) as well as by Zosimus, l. ii. p. 102. The Valesian writer is the only one who mentions the soldiers, and it is Zonaras alone who calls in the assistance of the senate. Eusebius prudently slides over this delicate transaction. But Sozomen, a century afterwards, ventures to assert the treasonable practices of Licinius.

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Re union
of the em-
pire.

A. D. 324.

tendency that it was almost immediately corrected, all his laws, and all the judicial proceedings of his reign, were at once abolished¹¹³. By this victory of Constantine, the Roman world was again united under the authority of one emperor, thirty-seven years after Diocletian had divided his power and provinces with his associate Maximian.

The successive steps of the elevation of Constantine, from his first assuming the purple at York, to the resignation of Licinius at Nicomedia, have been related with some minuteness and precision, not only as the events are in themselves both interesting and important, but still more as they contributed to the decline of the empire by the expence of blood and treasure, and by the perpetual increase, as well of the taxes, as of the military establishment. The foundation of Constantinople, and the establishment of the Christian religion, were the immediate and memorable consequences of this revolution.

¹¹³ See the Theodosian Code, l. xv. tit. 15. tom. v. p. 404, 405. These edicts of Constantine betray a degree of passion and precipitancy very unbecoming of the character of a lawgiver.

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The Progress of the Christian Religion, and the Sentiments, Manners, Numbers, and Condition, of the primitive Christians.

A CANDID but rational inquiry into the progress and establishment of Christianity, may be considered as a very essential part of the history of the Roman empire. While that great body was invaded by open violence, or undermined by slow decay, a pure and humble religion gently insinuated itself into the minds of men, grew up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigour from opposition, and finally erected the triumphant banner of the cross on the ruins of the Capitol. Nor was the influence of Christianity confined to the period or to the limits of the Roman empire. After a revolution of thirteen or fourteen centuries, that religion is still professed by the nations of Europe, the most distinguished portion of human kind in arts and learning as well as in arms. By the industry and zeal of the Europeans, it has been widely diffused to the most distant shores of Asia and Africa; and by the means of their colonies has been firmly established from Canada to Chili, in a world unknown to the ancients.

But this inquiry, however useful or entertaining, is attended with two peculiar difficulties. The scanty and suspicious materials of ecclesiastical

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Import-
ance of
the in-
quiry.

Its diffi-
culties.

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cal history seldom enable us to dispel the dark cloud that hangs over the first age of the church. The great law of impartiality too often obliges us to reveal the imperfections of the uninspired teachers and believers of the gospel; and, to a careless observer, *their* faults may seem to cast a shade on the faith which they professed. But the scandal of the pious Christian, and the fallacious triumph of the infidel, should cease as soon as they recollect not only *by whom*; but likewise *to whom*, the Divine Revelation was given. The theologian may indulge the pleasing task of describing Religion as she descended from Heaven; arrayed in her native purity. A more melancholy duty is imposed on the historian. He must discover the inevitable mixture of error and corruption, which she contracted in a long residence upon earth, among a weak and degenerate race of beings.

Five causes
of the
growth of
Christiani-
ty.

Our curiosity is naturally prompted to inquire by what means the Christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth. To this inquiry, an obvious but satisfactory answer may be returned; that it was owing to the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the ruling providence of its great Author. But as truth and reason seldom find so favourable a reception in the world, and as the wisdom of Providence frequently condescends to use the passions of the human heart, and the general circumstances of mankind, as instruments to execute its purpose; we may still be permitted
though

though with becoming submission, to ask, not indeed what were the first, but what were the secondary causes of the rapid growth of the Christian church? It will, perhaps, appear, that it was most effectually favoured and assisted by the five following causes: I. The inflexible, and, if we may use the expression, the intolerant zeal of the Christians, derived, it is true, from the Jewish religion, but purified from the narrow and unsocial spirit, which, instead of inviting, had deterred the Gentiles from embracing the law of Moses. II. The doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficacy to that important truth. III. The miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive church. IV. The pure and austere morals of the Christians. V. The union and discipline of the Christian republic, which gradually formed an independent and increasing state in the heart of the Roman empire.

I. We have already described the religious harmony of the ancient world, and the facility with which the most different and even hostile nations embraced, or at least respected, each other's superstitions. A single people refused to join in the common intercourse of mankind. The Jews, who, under the Assyrian and Persian monarchies, had languished for many ages the most despised portion of their slaves', emerged from

THE
FIRST
CAUSE.
Zeal of the
Jews.

' Dum Assyrios penes, Medosque, et Persas Oriens fuit, de spectissima pars servientium. Tacit. Hist. v. 8. Herodotus, who visited Asia

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from obscurity under the successors of Alexander; and as they multiplied to a surprising degree in the East, and afterwards in the West, they soon excited the curiosity and wonder of other nations². The stubborn obstinacy with which they maintained their peculiar rites and unsocial manners, seemed to mark them out a distinct species of men, who boldly professed, or who faintly disguised, their implacable hatred to the rest of human-kind³. Neither the violence of Antiochus, nor the arts of Herod, nor the example of the circumjacent nations, could ever persuade the Jews to associate with the institutions of Moses the elegant mythology of the Greeks⁴. According to the maxims of universal toleration, the Romans protected a superstition which they despised⁵. The polite Augustus condescended to give orders, that sacri-

Asia whilst it obeyed the last of those empires, slightly mentions the Syrians of Palestine, who, according to their own confession, had received from Egypt the rite of circumcision. See l. ii. c. 104.

² Diodorus Siculus, l. xl. Dion Cassius, l. xxxvii. p. 121. Tacit. Hist. v. 2—9. Justin, xxxvi. 2, 3.

³ Tradidit arcano quæcunque volumine Moses,
Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti,
Quæsitos ad fontes solos deducere verpas.

The letter of this law is not to be found in the present volume of Moses. But the wise, the humane Maimonides openly teaches, that if an idolater fall into the water, a Jew ought not to save him from instant death. See Basnage, Histoire des Juifs, l. vi. c. 28.

⁴ A Jewish sect, which indulged themselves in a sort of occasional conformity, derived from Herod, by whose example and authority they had been seduced, the name of Herodians. But their numbers were so inconsiderable, and their duration so short, that Josephus has not thought them worthy of his notice. See Pridcaux's Connection, vol. ii. p. 285.

⁵ Cicero pro Flacco, c. 28.

fices

sices should be offered for his prosperity in the temple of Jerusalem⁶; while the meanest of the posterity of Abraham, who should have paid the same homage to the Jupiter of the Capitol, would have been an object of abhorrence to himself and to his brethren. But the moderation of the conquerors was insufficient to appease the jealous prejudices of their subjects, who were alarmed and scandalized at the ensigns of paganism, which necessarily introduced themselves into a Roman province⁷. The mad attempt of Caligula to place his own statue in the temple of Jerusalem, was defeated by the unanimous resolution of a people who dreaded death much less than such an idolatrous profanation⁸. Their attachment to the law of Moses was equal to their detestation of foreign religions. The current of zeal and devotion, as it was contracted into a narrow channel, ran with the strength, and sometimes with the fury, of a torrent.

This inflexible perseverance, which appeared so odious or so ridiculous to the ancient world, assumes a more awful character, since Providence has deigned to reveal to us the mysterious history

Its gradual
increase.

⁶ Philo de Legatione. Augustus left a foundation for a perpetual sacrifice. Yet he approved of the neglect which his grandson Caius expressed towards the temple of Jerusalem. See Sueton. in August. c. 93. and Casaubon's notes on that passage.

⁷ See, in particular, Joseph. Antiquitat. xvii. 6. xviii. 3. and de Bel. Judaic. i. 33. and ii. 9. Edit. Havercamp.

⁸ Jussi a Caio Cesare, effigiem ejus in templo locare arma potius sumptere. Tacit. Hist. v. 9. Philo and Josephus gave a very circumstantial, but a very rhetorical, account of this transaction, which exceedingly perplexed the governor of Syria. At the first mention of this idolatrous proposal, King Agrippa fainted away; and did not recover his senses till the third day.

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of the chosen people. But the devout and even scrupulous attachment to the Mosaic religion, so conspicuous among the Jews who lived under the second temple, becomes still more surprising, if it is compared with the stubborn incredulity of their forefathers. When the law was given in thunder from Mount Sinai; when the tides of the ocean, and the course of the planets were suspended for the convenience of the Israelites; and when temporal rewards and punishments were the immediate consequences of their piety or disobedience, they perpetually relapsed into rebellion against the visible majesty of their Divine King, placed the idols of the nations in the sanctuary of Jehovah, and imitated every fantastic ceremony that was practised in the tents of the Arabs, or in the cities of Phœnicia⁹. As the protection of Heaven was deservedly withdrawn from the ungrateful race, their faith acquired a proportionable degree of vigour and purity. The contemporaries of Moses and Joshua had beheld with careless indifference the most amazing miracles. Under the pressure of every calamity, the belief of those miracles has preserved the Jews of a later period from the universal contagion of idolatry; and in contradiction to every known principle of the human mind, that singular people seems to have yielded a stronger and more ready assent to the traditions

⁹ For the enumeration of the Syrian and Arabian deities, it may be observed, that Milton has comprised in one hundred and thirty very beautiful lines, the two large and learned syntagmas, which Selden had composed on that abstruse subject.

of

of their remote ancestors, than to the evidence of their own senses¹⁰.

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The Jewish religion was admirably fitted for defence, but it was never designed for conquest; and it seems probable that the number of profelytes was never much superior to that of apostates. The divine promises were originally made, and the distinguishing rite of circumcision was enjoined to a single family. When the posterity of Abraham had multiplied like the sands of the sea, the Deity, from whose mouth they received a system of laws and ceremonies, declared himself the proper and as it were the national God of Israel; and with the most jealous care separated his favourite people from the rest of mankind. The conquest of the land of Canaan was accompanied with so many wonderful and with so many bloody circumstances, that the victorious Jews were left in a state of irreconcilable hostility with all their neighbours. They had been commanded to extirpate some of the most idolatrous tribes, and the execution of the Divine will had seldom been retarded by the weakness of humanity. With the other nations they were forbidden to contract any marriages or alliances, and the prohibition of receiving them into the congregation, which in some cases was perpetual, almost always extended to the third,

Their religion better suited to defence than to conquest.

¹⁰ "How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewn among them?" (Numbers, xiv. 11.) It would be easy, but it would be unbecoming, to justify the complaint of the Deity from the whole tenor of the Mosaic history.

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to the seventh, or even to the tenth generation. The obligation of preaching to the Gentiles the faith of Moses, had never been inculcated as a precept of the law, nor were the Jews inclined to impose it on themselves as a voluntary duty. In the admission of new citizens, that unsocial people was actuated by the selfish vanity of the Greeks, rather than by the generous policy of Rome. The descendants of Abraham were flattered by the opinion, that they alone were the heirs of the covenant, and they were apprehensive of diminishing the value of their inheritance, by sharing it too easily with the strangers of the earth. A larger acquaintance with mankind, extended their knowledge without correcting their prejudices; and whenever the God of Israel acquired any new votaries, he was much more indebted to the inconstant humour of polytheism than to the active zeal of his own missionaries¹¹. The religion of Moses seems to be instituted for a particular country as well as for a single nation; and if a strict obedience had been paid to the order, that every male, three times in the year, should present himself before the Lord Jehovah, it would have been impossible that the Jews could ever have spread themselves beyond the narrow limits of the promised land¹². That obstacle was indeed removed by the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem; but the most con-

¹¹ All that relates to the Jewish proselytes has been very ably treated by Basnage, *Hist. des Juifs*, l. vi. c. 6, 7.

¹² See *Exod.* xxiv. 23. *Deut.* xvi. 16. the commentators, and a very sensible note in the *Universal History*, vol. i. p. 603. edit. fol.

considerable part of the Jewish religion was involved in its destruction; and the Pagans, who had long wondered at the strange report of an empty sanctuary²³, were at a loss to discover what could be the object, or what could be the instruments, of a worship which was destitute of temples and of altars, of priests and of sacrifices. Yet even in their fallen state, the Jews, still asserting their lofty and exclusive privileges, shunned, instead of courting, the society of strangers. They still insisted with inflexible rigour on those parts of the law which it was in their power to practise. Their peculiar distinctions of days, of meats, and a variety of trivial though burdensome observances, were so many objects of disgust and aversion for the other nations, to whose habits and prejudices they were diametrically opposite. The painful and even dangerous rite of circumcision was alone capable of repelling a willing proselyte from the door of the synagogue²⁴.

Under these circumstances, Christianity offered itself to the world, armed with the strength of the Mosaic law, and delivered from the weight of its fetters. An exclusive zeal for the truth of religion, and the unity of God, was as carefully

More liberal seal of Christianity.

²³ When Pompey, using or abusing the right of conquest, entered into the Holy of Holies, it was observed with amazement, "Nulla intus Deum effigie, vacuum sedem et inania arcana." Tacit. Hist. 7. 9. It was a popular saying, with regard to the Jews,

Nil præter nubes et cæli numen adorant.

²⁴ A second kind of circumcision was inflicted on a Samaritan or Egyptian proselyte. The sullen indifference of the Talmudists, with respect to the conversion of strangers, may be seen in Basnage, Histoire des Juifs, l. vi. c. 6.

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inculcated in the new as in the ancient system: and whatever was now revealed to mankind concerning the nature and designs of the Supreme Being, was fitted to increase their reverence for that mysterious doctrine. The divine authority of Moses and the prophets was admitted, and even established, as the firmest basis of Christianity. From the beginning of the world, an uninterrupted series of predictions had announced and prepared the long expected coming of the Messiah, who, in compliance with the gross apprehensions of the Jews, had been more frequently represented under the character of a King and Conqueror, than under that of a Prophet, a Martyr, and the Son of God. By his expiatory sacrifice, the imperfect sacrifices of the temple were at once consummated and abolished. The ceremonial law, which consisted only of types and figures, was succeeded by a pure and spiritual worship; equally adapted to all climates, as well as to every condition of mankind; and to the initiation of blood, was substituted a more harmless initiation of water. The promise of divine favour, instead of being partially confined to the posterity of Abraham, was universally proposed to the freeman and the slave, to the Greek and to the barbarian, to the Jew and to the Gentile. Every privilege that could raise the proselyte from earth to Heaven, that could exalt his devotion, secure his happiness, or even gratify that secret pride, which, under the semblance of devotion, insinuates itself into the human heart,

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was still reserved for the members of the Christian church; but at the same time all mankind was permitted, and even solicited, to accept the glorious distinction, which was not only proffered as a favour, but imposed as an obligation. It became the most sacred duty of a new convert to diffuse among his friends and relations the inestimable blessing which he had received, and to warn them against a refusal that would be severely punished as a criminal disobedience to the will of a benevolent but all-powerful deity.

The enfranchisement of the church from the bonds of the synagogue, was a work however of some time and of some difficulty. The Jewish converts, who acknowledged Jesus in the character of the Messiah foretold by their ancient oracles, respected him as a prophetic teacher of virtue and religion; but they obstinately adhered to the ceremonies of their ancestors, and were desirous of imposing them on the Gentiles, who continually augmented the number of believers. These Judaising Christians seem to have argued with some degree of plausibility from the divine origin of the Mosaic law, and from the immutable perfections of its great Author. They affirmed, *that* if the Being, who is the same through all eternity, had designed to abolish those sacred rites which had served to distinguish his chosen people, the repeal of them would have been no less clear and solemn than their first promulgation: *that*, instead of those frequent declarations, which either suppose or assert the perpetuity of

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and reasons
of the be-
lieving
Jews.

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the Mosaic religion, it would have been represented as a provisional scheme intended to last only till the coming of the Messiah, who should instruct mankind in a more perfect mode of faith and of worship¹⁵: *that* the Messiah himself, and his disciples who conversed with him on earth, instead of authorizing by their example the most minute observances of the Mosaic law¹⁶, would have published to the world the abolition of those useless and obsolete ceremonies, without suffering Christianity to remain during so many years obscurely confounded among the sects of the Jewish church. Arguments like these appear to have been used in the defence of the expiring cause of the Mosaic law; but the industry of our learned divines has abundantly explained the ambiguous language of the Old Testament, and the ambiguous conduct of the apostolic teachers. It was proper gradually to unfold the system of the Gospel, and to pronounce, with the utmost caution and tenderness, a sentence of condemnation so repugnant to the inclination and prejudices of the believing Jews.

¹⁵ These arguments were urged with great ingenuity by the Jew Orobio, and refuted with equal ingenuity and candour by the Christian Limborch. See the *Amica Collatio* (it well deserves that name), or account of the dispute between them.

¹⁶ *Jesus . . . circumcissus erat ; cibus utebatur Judaicis ; vestitū simili purgatus scabie mittebat ad sacerdotes ; Paschata et alios dies festos religiosè observabat : Si quos sanavit sabatho, ostendit non tantum ex lege, sed et exceptis sententiis talia opera sabatho non interdicta. Grotius de veritate Religionis Christianæ, l. v. c. 7. A little afterwards (c. 12.), he expatiates on the condescension of the apostles.*

The

The history of the church of Jerusalem affords a lively proof of the necessity of those precautions, and of the deep impression which the Jewish religion had made on the minds of its sectaries. The first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were all circumcised Jews; and the congregation over which they presided, united the law of Moses with the doctrine of Christ¹⁷. It was natural that the primitive tradition of a church which was founded only forty years after the death of Christ, and was governed almost as many years under the immediate inspection of his apostle, should be received as the standard of orthodoxy¹⁸. The distant churches very frequently appealed to the authority of their venerable Parent, and relieved her distresses by a liberal contribution of alms. But when numerous and opulent societies were established in the great cities of the empire, in Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome, the reverence which Jerusalem had inspired to all the Christian colonies insensibly diminished. The Jewish converts, or, as they were afterwards called, the Nazarenes, who had laid the foundations of the church, soon found themselves overwhelmed by the increasing multitudes, that from all the various religions of

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The Nazarene church of Jerusalem.

¹⁷ Pæne omnes Christum Deum sub legis observatione credebant. Sulpicius Severus, ii. 31. See Eusebius, Hist. Ecclesiast. l. iv. c. 5.

¹⁸ Mosheim de Rebus Christianis ante Constantinum Magnum, p. 153. In this masterly performance, which I shall often have occasion to quote, he enters much more fully into the state of the primitive church, than he has an opportunity of doing in his General History.

polytheism insisted under the banner of Christ: and the Gentiles, who, with the approbation of their peculiar apostle, had rejected the intolerable weight of Mosaic ceremonies, at length refused to their more scrupulous brethren the same toleration which at first they had humbly solicited for their own practice. The ruin of the temple, of the city, and of the public religion of the Jews, was severely felt by the Nazarenes; as in their manners, though not in their faith, they maintained so intimate a connexion with their impious countrymen, whose misfortunes were attributed by the Pagans to the contempt, and more justly ascribed by the Christians to the wrath, of the Supreme Deity. The Nazarenes retired from the ruins of Jerusalem to the little town of Pella beyond the Jordan, where that ancient church languished above sixty years in solitude and obscurity¹⁹. They still enjoyed the comfort of making frequent and devout visits to the *Holy City*, and the hope of being one day restored to those seats which both nature and religion taught them to love as well as to revere. But at length, under the reign of Hadrian, the desperate fanaticism of the Jews filled up the measure of their calamities; and the Romans, exasperated by their repeated rebellions, exercised the rights of victory with unusual rigour. The emperor found-

¹⁹ Eusebius, l. iii. c. 5. Le Clerc, Hist. Ecclesiast. p. 605. During this occasional absence, the bishop and church of Pella still retained the title of Jerusalem. In the same manner, the Roman pontiffs resided seventy years at Avignon; and the patriarchs of Alexandria have long since transferred their episcopal seat to Cairo.

ed,

ed, under the name of *Ælia Capitolina*, a new city on Mount Sion²⁰, to which he gave the privileges of a colony; and denouncing the severest penalties against any of the Jewish people who should dare to approach its precincts, he fixed a vigilant garrison of a Roman cohort to enforce the execution of his orders. The Nazarenes had only one way left to escape the common proscription, and the force of truth was on this occasion assisted by the influence of temporal advantages. They elected Marcus for their bishop, a prelate of the race of the Gentiles, and most probably a native either of Italy or of some of the Latin provinces. At his persuasion, the most considerable part of the congregation renounced the Mosaic law, in the practice of which they had persevered above a century. By this sacrifice of their habits and privileges, they purchased a free admission into the colony of Hadrian, and more firmly cemented their union with the Catholic church²¹.

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When the name and honours of the church of Jerusalem had been restored to Mount Sion, the crimes of heresy and schism were imputed to the obscure remnant of the Nazarenes, which refused,

The Ebionites.

²⁰ Dion Cassius, l. lxxix. The exile of the Jewish nation from Jerusalem is attested by Aristo of Pella (apud Euseb. l. iv. c. 6.), and is mentioned by several ecclesiastical writers; though some of them too hastily extend this interdiction to the whole country of Palestine.

²¹ Eusebius, l. iv. c. 6. Sulpicius Severus, ii. 31. By comparing their unsatisfactory accounts, Mosheim (p. 327, &c.) has drawn out a very distinct representation of the circumstances and motives of this revolution.

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to accompany their Latin bishop. They still preserved their former habitation of Pella, spread themselves into the villages adjacent to Damascus, and formed an inconsiderable church in the city of Botrea, or, as it is now called, of Aleppo, in Syria²². The name of Nazarenes was deemed too honourable for those Christian Jews, and they soon received from the supposed poverty of their understanding, as well as of their condition, the contemptuous epithet of Ebionites²³. In a few years after the return of the church of Jerusalem, it became a matter of doubt and controversy, whether a man who sincerely acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah, but who still continued to observe the law of Moses, could possibly hope for salvation. The humane temper of Justin Martyr inclined him to answer this question in the affirmative; and though he expressed himself with the most guarded diffidence, he ventured to determine in favour of such an imperfect Christian, if he were content to practise the Mosaic ceremonies, without pre-

²² Le Clerc (*Hist. Ecclesiast.* p. 477. 535.) seems to have collected from Eusebius, Jerome, Epiphanius, and other writers, all the principal circumstances that relate to the Nazarenes or Ebionites. The nature of their opinions soon divided them into a stricter and a milder sect; and there is some reason to conjecture, that the family of Jesus Christ remained members, at least, of the latter and more moderate party.

²³ Some writers have been pleased to create an Ebion, the imaginary author of their sect and name. But we can more safely rely on the learned Eusebius than on the vehement Tertullian, or the credulous Epiphanius. According to Le Clerc, the Hebrew word *Ebjonim* may be translated into Latin by that of *Pauperes*. See *Hist. Ecclesiast.* p. 477.

tending

tending to assert their general use or necessity. But when Justin was pressed to declare the sentiment of the church, he confessed that there were very many among the orthodox Christians, who not only excluded their Judaizing brethren from the hope of salvation, but who declined any intercourse with them in the common offices of friendship, hospitality, and social life²⁴. The more rigorous opinion prevailed, as it was natural to expect, over the milder; and an eternal bar of separation was fixed between the disciples of Moses and those of Christ. The unfortunate Ebionites, rejected from one religion as apostates, and from the other as heretics, found themselves compelled to assume a more decided character; and although some traces of that obsolete sect may be discovered as late as the fourth century, they insensibly melted away either into the church or the synagogue²⁵.

²⁴ See the very curious Dialogue of Justin Martyr with the Jew Trypho. The conference between them was held at Ephesus, in the reign of Antoninus Pius, and about twenty years after the return of the church at Pella to Jerusalem. For this date consult the accurate note of Tillemont, *Memoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. ii. p. 511.

²⁵ Of all the systems of Christianity, that of Abyssinia is the only one which still adheres to the Mosaic rites (*Geddes's Church History of Æthiopia*, and *Dissertations de la Grand sur la Relation du P. Lobo*). The eunuch of the queen Candace might suggest some suspicions; but as we are assured (*Socrates*, i. 19. *Sozomen*, ii. 24. *Ludolphus*, p. 281.), that the Æthiopians were not converted till the fourth century; it is more reasonable to believe, that they respected the Sabbath, and distinguished the forbidden meats, in imitation of the Jews, who, in a very early period, were seated on both sides of the Red Sea. Circumcision had been practised by the most ancient Æthiopians, from motives of health and cleanliness, which seem to be explained in the *Recherches Philosophiques sur les Americains*, tom. ii. p. 117.

While

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stics.

While the orthodox church preserved a just medium between excessive veneration and improper contempt for the law of Moses, the various heretics deviated into equal but opposite extremes of error and extravagance. From the acknowledged truth of the Jewish religion, the Ebionites had concluded that it could never be abolished. From its supposed imperfections the Gnostics as hastily inferred that it never was instituted by the wisdom of the Deity. There are some objections against the authority of Moses and the prophets, which too readily present themselves to the sceptical mind; though they can only be derived from our ignorance of remote antiquity, and from our incapacity to form an adequate judgment of the divine œconomy. These objections were eagerly embraced and as petulantly urged by the vain science of the Gnostics²⁶. As those heretics were, for the most part, averse to the pleasures of sense, they morosely arraigned the polygamy of the patriarchs, the gallantries of David, and the seraglio of Solomon. The conquest of the land of Canaan, and the extirpation of the unsuspecting natives, they were at a loss how to reconcile with the common notions of humanity and justice. But when they recollected the sanguinary list of murders, of executions, and of massacres, which stain almost every page of the Jewish annals, they

²⁶ Beausobre, *Histoire du Manichéisme*, l. i. c. 3. has stated their objections, particularly those of Faustus, the adversary of Augustin, with the most learned impartiality.

acknow-

acknowledged that the barbarians of Palestine had exercised as much compassion towards their idolatrous enemies, as they had ever shewn to their friends or countrymen²⁷. Passing from the sectaries of the law to the law itself, they asserted that it was impossible that a religion which consisted only of bloody sacrifices and trifling ceremonies, and whose rewards as well as punishments were all of a carnal and temporal nature, could inspire the love of virtue, or restrain the impetuosity of passion. The Mosaic account of the creation and fall of man was treated with profane derision by the Gnostics, who would not listen with patience to the repose of the Deity after six days labour, to the rib of Adam, the garden of Eden, the trees of life and of knowledge, the speaking serpent, the forbidden fruit, and the condemnation pronounced against human kind for the venial offence of their first progenitors²⁸. The God of Israel was impiously represented by the Gnostics, as a Being liable to passion and to error, capricious in his favour, implacable in his resentment, meanly jealous of his superstitious worship, and confining his partial providence to a single people, and to this transitory life. In such a character they could discover none of the features of the wise and omnipotent father of the

²⁷ Apud ipsos fides obstinata, misericordia in promptu: adversus omnes alios hostile odium. Tacit. Hist. v. 4. Surely Tacitus had seen the Jews with too favourable an eye. The perusal of Josephus must have destroyed the antithesis.

²⁸ Dr. Burnet (*Archæologia*, l. ii. c. 7.) has discussed the first Chapters of Genesis with too much wit and freedom.

universe.

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universe²⁹. They allowed that the religion of the Jews was somewhat less criminal than the idolatry of the Gentiles; but it was their fundamental doctrine, that the Christ whom they adored as the first and brightest emanation of the Deity, appeared upon earth to rescue mankind from their various errors, and to reveal a *new* system of truth and perfection. The most learned of the fathers, by a very singular condescension, have imprudently admitted the sophistry of the Gnostics. Acknowledging that the literal sense is repugnant to every principle of faith as well as reason, they deem themselves secure and invulnerable behind the ample veil of allegory, which they carefully spread over every tender part of the Mosaic dispensation³⁰.

Their
sects, pro-
gress, and
influence.

It has been remarked with more ingenuity than truth, that the virgin purity of the church was never violated by schism or heresy before the reign of Trajan or Hadrian, about one hundred years after the death of Christ³¹. We may observe with much more propriety, that, during that period, the disciples of the Messiah were indulged in a freer latitude both of faith and practice, than has ever been allowed in succeed-

²⁹ The milder Gnostics considered Jehovah, the Creator, as a Being of a mixed nature between God and the Dæmon. Others confounded him with the evil principle. Consult the second century of the general history of Mosheim, which gives a very distinct, though concise, account of their strange opinions on this subject.

³⁰ See Beausobre, *Hist. du Manichéisme*, l. i. c. 4. Origen and St. Augustin were among the Allegorists.

³¹ Hegesippus, ap. Euseb. l. iii. 32. iv. 22. Clemens Alexandrin. *Stromat.* vii. 17.

ing

ing ages. As the terms of communion were insensibly narrowed, and the spiritual authority of the prevailing party was exercised with increasing severity, many of its most respectable adherents, who were called upon to renounce, were provoked to assert their private opinions, to pursue the consequences of their mistaken principles, and openly to erect the standard of rebellion against the unity of the church. The Gnostics were distinguished as the most polite, the most learned, and the most wealthy of the Christian name, and that general appellation which expressed a superiority of knowledge, was either assumed by their own pride, or ironically bestowed by the envy of their adversaries. They were almost without exception of the race of the Gentiles, and their principal founders seem to have been natives of Syria or Egypt, where the warmth of the climate disposes both the mind and the body to indolent and contemplative devotion. The Gnostics blended with the faith of Christ many sublime but obscure tenets, which they derived from oriental philosophy, and even from the religion of Zoroaster, concerning the eternity of matter, the existence of two principles, and the mysterious hierarchy of the invisible world²⁵. As soon as they launched out into that vast abyss, they delivered themselves to

²⁵ In the account of the Gnostics of the second and third centuries, Mosheim is ingenious and candid; Le Clerc dull, but exact: Beausobre almost always an apologist; and it is much to be feared, that the primitive fathers are very frequently calumniators.

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the guidance of a disordered imagination; and as the paths of error are various and infinite, the Gnostics were imperceptibly divided into more than fifty particular sects³³, of whom the most celebrated appear to have been the Basilidians, the Valentinians, the Marcionites, and, in a still later period, the Manichæans. Each of these sects could boast of its bishops and congregations, of its doctors and martyrs³⁴, and, instead of the four gospels adopted by the church, the heretics produced a multitude of histories, in which the actions and discourses of Christ and of his apostles were adapted to their respective tenets³⁵. The success of the Gnostics was rapid and extensive³⁶. They covered Asia and Egypt, established themselves in Rome, and sometimes

³³ See the catalogues of Irenæus and Epiphanius. It must indeed be allowed, that those writers were inclined to multiply the number of sects which opposed the unity of the church.

³⁴ Eusebius, l. iv. c. 15. Sozomen, l. ii. c. 31. See in Bayle, in the article of *Marcion*, a curious detail of a dispute on that subject. It should seem that some of the Gnostics (the Basilidians) declined, and even refused the honour of martyrdom. Their reasons were singular and abstruse. See Mosheim, p. 359.

³⁵ See a very remarkable passage of Origen (*Proem. ad Lucan.*). That indefatigable writer, who had consumed his life in the study of the scriptures, relies for their authenticity on the inspired authority of the church. It was impossible that the Gnostics could receive our present gospels, many parts of which (particularly in the resurrection of Christ) are directly, and as it might seem designedly, pointed against their favourite tenets. It is therefore somewhat singular that Ignatius (*Epist. ad Smyrn. Patr. Apostol. tom. ii. p. 34.*) should chuse to employ a vague and doubtful tradition, instead of quoting the certain testimony of the evangelists.

³⁶ *Faciunt favos et vespæ; faciunt ecclesias et Marcionitæ*, is the strong expression of Tertullian, which I am obliged to quote from memory. In the time of Epiphanius (*advers. Hæreses, p. 302.*) the Marcionites were very numerous in Italy, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, and Persia.

penetrated into the provinces of the West. For the most part they arose in the second century, flourished during the third, and were suppressed in the fourth or fifth, by the prevalence of more fashionable controversies, and by the superior ascendant of the reigning power. Though they constantly disturbed the peace, and frequently disgraced the name, of religion, they contributed to assist rather than to retard the progress of Christianity. The Gentile converts, whose strongest objections and prejudices were directed against the law of Moses, could find admission into many Christian societies, which required not from their untutored mind any belief of an antecedent revelation. Their faith was insensibly fortified and enlarged, and the church was ultimately benefited by the conquests of its most inveterate enemies³⁷.

But whatever difference of opinion might subsist between the Orthodox, the Ebionites, and the Gnostics, concerning the divinity or the obligation of the Mosaic law, they were all equally animated by the same exclusive zeal, and by the same abhorrence for idolatry which had distinguished the Jews from the other nations of the ancient world. The philosopher, who considered the system of polytheism as a composition of human fraud and error, could disguise a smile of contempt under the mask of devotion, without apprehending that either the mockery, or the

The demons considered as the gods of antiquity.

³⁷ Augustin is a memorable instance of this gradual progress from reason to faith. He was, during several years, engaged in the Manichean sect.

compliance,

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compliance, would expose him to the resentment of any invisible, or, as he conceived them, imaginary powers. But the established religions of Paganism were seen by the primitive Christians in a much more odious and formidable light. It was the universal sentiment both of the church and of heretics, that the dæmons were the authors, the patrons, and the objects of idolatry²⁸. Those rebellious spirits who had been degraded from the rank of angels, and cast down into the infernal pit, were still permitted to roam upon earth, to torment the bodies, and to seduce the minds, of sinful men. The dæmons soon discovered and abused the natural propensity of the human heart towards devotion, and, astutely withdrawing the adoration of mankind from their Creator, they usurped the place and honours of the Supreme Deity. By the success of their malicious contrivances, they at once gratified their own vanity and revenge, and obtained the only comfort of which they were yet susceptible, the hope of involving the human species in the participation of their guilt and misery. It was confessed, or at least it was imagined, that they had distributed among themselves the most important characters of polytheism, one dæmon assuming the name and attributes of Jupiter, another of Æsculapius, a third of Venus, and a fourth perhaps of Apollo²⁹; and that, by the

²⁸ The unanimous sentiment of the primitive church is very clearly explained by Justin. Martyr. Apolog. Major, by Athenagoras Legat. c. 22, &c. and by Lactantius, Institut. Divin. ii. 14—19.

²⁹ Tertullian (Apolog. c. 23.) alleges the confession of the Dæmons themselves as often as they were tormented by the Christian exorcists.

advan-

advantage of their long experience and aerial nature, they were enabled to execute, with sufficient skill and dignity, the parts which they had undertaken. They lurked in the temples, instituted festivals and sacrifices, invented fables, pronounced oracles, and were frequently allowed to perform miracles. The Christians, who, by the interposition of evil spirits, could so readily explain every præternatural appearance, were disposed and even desirous to admit the most extravagant fictions of the Pagan mythology. But the belief of the Christian was accompanied with horror. The most trifling mark of respect to the national worship he considered as a direct homage yielded to the dæmon, and as an act of rebellion against the majesty of God.

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In consequence of this opinion, it was the first but arduous duty of a Christian to preserve himself pure and undefiled by the practice of idolatry. The religion of the nations was not merely a speculative doctrine professed in the schools or preached in the temples. The innumerable deities and rites of polytheism were closely interwoven with every circumstance of business or pleasure, of public or of private life; and it seemed impossible to escape the observance of them, without, at the same time, renouncing the commerce of mankind, and all the offices and amusements of society⁴⁰. The important

Abhorrence of the Christians for idolatry.

Ceremonies.

⁴⁰ Tertullian has written a most severe treatise against idolatry, to caution his brethren against the hourly danger of incurring that guilt. *Recogita sylvam, et quantæ latitant spinæ. De Coronâ Militis, c. 10.*

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transactions of peace and war were prepared or concluded by solemn sacrifices, in which the magistrate, the senator, and the soldier, were obliged to preside or to participate⁴². The public spectacles were an essential part of the cheerful devotion of the Pagans, and the gods were supposed to accept, as the most grateful offering, the games that the prince and people celebrated in honour of their peculiar festivals⁴³. The Christian, who with pious horror avoided the abomination of the circus or the theatre, found himself encompassed with infernal snares in every convivial entertainment, as often as his friends, invoking the hospitable deities, poured out libations to each other's happiness⁴⁴. When the bride, struggling with well-affected reluctance, was forced in hymenæal pomp over the threshold of her new habitation⁴⁵, or when the

⁴² The Roman senate was always held in a temple or consecrated place (Aulus Gellius, xiv. 7.). Before they entered on business, every senator dropt some wine and frankincense on the altar. Sueton. in August. c. 35.

⁴³ See Tertullian, De Spectaculis. This severe reformer shews no more indulgence to a tragedy of Euripides, than to a combat of gladiators. The dress of the actors particularly offends him. By the use of the lofty buskin, they impiously strive to add a cubit to their stature, c. 23.

⁴⁴ The ancient practice of concluding the entertainment with libations, may be found in every classic. Socrates and Seneca, in their last moments, made a noble application of this custom. Postquam stagnum calidæ aquæ introiit, respergens proximos servorum, additâ voce, libare se liquorem illum Jovi Liberatori. Tacit. Annal. xv. 64.

⁴⁵ See the elegant but idolatrous hymn of Catullus, on the nuptials of Manlius and Julian. O Hymen, Hymenæe Iô! Quis huic Deo comparari audeat?

sad proceſſion of the dead ſlowly moved towards the funeral pile⁴⁵; the Chriſtian, on theſe intereſting occaſions, was compelled to deſert the perſons who were the deareſt to him, rather than contract the guilt inherent to thoſe impious ceremonies. Every art and every trade that was in the leaſt concerned in the framing or adorning of idols was polluted by the ſtain of idolatry⁴⁶; a ſevere ſentence, ſince it devoted to eternal miſery the far greater part of the community, which is employed in the exerciſe of liberal or mechanic profeſſions. If we caſt our eyes over the numerous remains of antiquity, we ſhall perceive, that beſides the immediate representations of the Gods, and the holy inſtruments of their worſhip, the elegant forms and agreeable fictions conſecrated by the imagination of the Greeks, were introduced as the richeſt ornaments of the houſes, the dreſs, and the furniture, of the Pagans⁴⁷. Even the arts of muſic and painting, of eloquence and poetry, flowed from the ſame impure origin. In the ſtyle of the fathers, Apollo and the Muſes were the organs of the infernal ſpirit, Homer and Virgil were the moſt

⁴⁵ The ancient funerals (in thoſe of Miſenus and Pallas) are no leſs accurately deſcribed by Virgil, than they are illuſtrated by his commentator, Servius. The pile itſelf was an altar, the flames were fed with the blood of victims, and all the aſſiſtants were ſprinkled with luſtral water.

⁴⁶ Tertullian de Idololatria, c. 11.

⁴⁷ See every part of Monſaucon's Antiquities. Even the reverſes of the Greek and Roman coins were frequently of an idolatrous nature. Here indeed the ſcruples of the Chriſtian were ſuſpended by a ſtronger paſſion.

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eminent of his servants, and the beautiful mythology which pervades and animates the compositions of their genius, is destined to celebrate the glory of the dæmons. Even the common language of Greece and Rome abounded with familiar but impious expressions, which the imprudent Christian might too carelessly utter, or too patiently hear⁴⁸.

Festivals.

The dangerous temptations which on every side lurked in ambush to surprise the unguarded believer, assailed him with redoubled violence on the days of solemn festivals. So artfully were they framed and disposed throughout the year, that superstition always wore the appearance of pleasure, and often of virtue⁴⁹. Some of the most sacred festivals in the Roman ritual were destined to salute the new calends of January with vows of public and private felicity, to indulge the pious remembrance of the dead and living, to ascertain the inviolable bounds of property, to hail, on the return of spring, the genial powers of fecundity, to perpetuate the two memorable æras of Rome, the foundation of the city, and that of the republic, and to restore, during the humane license of the Saturnalia, the primitive equality of mankind. Some idea may

⁴⁸ Tertullian de Idololatria, c. 20, 21, 22. If a Pagan friend (on the occasion perhaps of sneezing) used the familiar expression of "Jupiter blest you," the Christian was obliged to protect against the divinity of Jupiter.

⁴⁹ Consult the most laboured work of Ovid, his imperfect *Festi*. He finished no more than the first six months of the year. The compilation of Macrobius is called the *Saturnalia*, but it is only a small part of the first book that bears any relation to the title.

be

be conceived of the abhorrence of the Christians for such impious ceremonies, by the scrupulous delicacy which they displayed on a much less alarming occasion. On days of general festivity, it was the custom of the ancients to adorn their doors with lamps and with branches of laurel, and to crown their heads with a garland of flowers. This innocent and elegant practice might perhaps have been tolerated as a mere civil institution. But it most unluckily happened that the doors were under the protection of the household gods, that the laurel was sacred to the lover of Daphne, and that garlands of flowers, though frequently worn as a symbol either of joy or mourning, had been dedicated in their first origin to the service of superstition. The trembling Christians, who were persuaded in this instance to comply with the fashion of their country, and the commands of the magistrate, laboured under the most gloomy apprehensions, from the reproaches of their own conscience, the censures of the church, and the denunciations of divine vengeance⁵⁰.

Such was the anxious diligence which was required to guard the chastity of the gospel from the infectious breath of idolatry. The supersti-

Zeal for
Christian-
ity.

⁵⁰ Tertullian has composed a defence, or rather panegyric, of the rash action of a Christian soldier, who, by throwing away his crown of laurel, had exposed himself and his brethren to the most imminent danger. By the mention of the *emperors* (Severus and Caracalla) it is evident, notwithstanding the wishes of M. de Tillemont, that Tertullian composed his treatise *De Coronâ*, long before he was engaged in the errors of the Montanists. See *Memoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. iii.

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tious observances of public or private rites were carelessly practised, from education and habit, by the followers of the established religion. But as often as they occurred, they afforded the Christians an opportunity of declaring and confirming their zealous opposition. By these frequent protestations their attachment to the faith was continually fortified, and in proportion to the increase of zeal, they combated with the more ardour and success in the holy war, which they had undertaken against the empire of the dæmons.

THE SE-
COND
CAUSE.
The doc-
trine of the
immortali-
ty of the
soul among
the philoso-
phers;

II. The writings of Cicero⁵¹ represent in the most lively colours the ignorance, the errors, and the uncertainty of the ancient philosophers with regard to the immortality of the soul. When they are desirous of arming their disciples against the fear of death, they inculcate, as an obvious, though melancholy position, that the fatal stroke of our dissolution releases us from the calamities of life; and that those can no longer suffer who no longer exist. Yet there were a few sages of Greece and Rome who had conceived a more exalted, and, in some respects, a juster idea of human nature; though it must be confessed, that, in the sublime inquiry, their reason had been often guided by their imagination, and that their imagination had been prompted by

⁵¹ In particular, the first book of the *Tusculan Questions*, and the treatise *De Senectute*, and the *Somnium Scipionis*, contain, in the most beautiful language, every thing that Grecian philosophy, or Roman good sense, could possibly suggest on this dark but important object.

their

their vanity. When they viewed with complacency the extent of their own mental powers, when they exercised the various faculties of memory, of fancy, and of judgment, in the most profound speculations, or the most important labours, and when they reflected on the desire of fame, which transported them into future ages far beyond the bounds of death and of the grave; they were unwilling to confound themselves with the beasts of the field, or to suppose, that a being for whose dignity they entertained the most sincere admiration, could be limited to a spot of earth, and to a few years of duration. With this favourable prepossession they summoned to their aid the science, or rather the language, of Metaphysics. They soon discovered, that as none of the properties of matter will apply to the operations of the mind, the human soul must consequently be a substance distinct from the body, pure, simple, and spiritual, incapable of dissolution, and susceptible of a much higher degree of virtue and happiness after the release from its corporeal prison. From these specious and noble principles, the philosophers who trod in the footsteps of Plato, deduced a very unjustifiable conclusion, since they asserted, not only the future immortality, but the past eternity of the human soul, which they were too apt to consider as a portion of the infinite and self-existing spirit, which pervades and sustains the universe⁵².

⁵² The pre-existence of human souls, so far at least as that doctrine is compatible with religion, was adopted by many of the Greek and Latin fathers. See Beaufobre, *Hist. du Manichéisme*, l. vi. c. 4.

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A doctrine thus removed beyond the senses and the experience of mankind, might serve to amuse the leisure of a philosophic mind; or, in the silence of solitude, it might sometimes impart a ray of comfort to desponding virtue; but the faint impression which had been received in the schools, was soon obliterated by the commerce and business of active life. We are sufficiently acquainted with the eminent persons who flourished in the age of Cicero, and of the first Cæsars, with their actions, their characters, and their motives, to be assured that their conduct in this life was never regulated by any serious conviction of the rewards or punishments of a future state. At the bar and in the senate of Rome the ablest orators were not apprehensive of giving offence to their hearers, by exposing that doctrine as an idle and extravagant opinion, which was rejected with contempt by every man of a liberal education and understanding⁵³.

among the
Pagans of
Greece and
Rome;

Since therefore the most sublime efforts of philosophy can extend no farther than feebly to point out the desire, the hope, or, at most, the probability, of a future state, there is nothing except a divine revelation, that can ascertain the existence, and describe the condition, of the invisible country which is destined to receive the souls of men after their separation from the body.

⁵³ See Cicero pro Cluent. c. 61. Cæsar ap. Sallust. de Bell. Catilin. c. 50. Juvenal. Satir. ii. 149.

Esse aliquos manes, et subterranea regna,

Nec pueri credunt, nisi qui nondum æra lavantur.

But

But we may perceive several defects inherent to the popular religions of Greece and Rome, which rendered them very unequal to so arduous a task. C H A P.
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1. The general system of their mythology was unsupported by any solid proofs; and the wisest among the Pagans had already disclaimed its usurped authority. 2. The description of the infernal regions had been abandoned to the fancy of painters and of poets, who peopled them with so many phantoms and monsters, who dispensed their rewards and punishments with so little equity, that a solemn truth, the most congenial to the human heart, was oppressed and disgraced by the absurd mixture of the wildest fictions⁵⁴.

3. The doctrine of a future state was scarcely considered among the devout polytheists of Greece and Rome as a fundamental article of faith. The providence of the gods, as it related to public communities rather than to private individuals, was principally displayed on the visible theatre of the present world. The petitions which were offered on the altars of Jupiter or Apollo expressed the anxiety of their worshippers for temporal happiness, and their ignorance or indifference concerning a future life⁵⁵. The

⁵⁴ The xith book of the *Odyssey* gives a very dreary and incoherent account of the infernal shades. Pindar and Virgil have embellished the picture; but even those poets, though more correct than their great model, are guilty of very strange inconsistencies. See Bayle, *Responses aux Questions d'un Provincial*, part iii. c. 22.

⁵⁵ See the xvith epistle of the first book of Horace, the xiiith Satire of Juvenal, and the iid Satire of Persius: these popular discourses express the sentiment and language of the multitude.

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among the
barbari-
ans;

among the
Jews;

important truth of the immortality of the soul was inculcated with more diligence as well as success in India, in Assyria, in Egypt, and in Gaul; and since we cannot attribute such a difference to the superior knowledge of the barbarians, we must ascribe it to the influence of an established priesthood, which employed the motives of virtue as the instrument of ambition⁵⁶.

We might naturally expect, that a principle so essential to religion, would have been revealed in the clearest terms to the chosen people of Palestine, and that it might safely have been intrusted to the hereditary priesthood of Aaron. It is incumbent on us to adore the mysterious dispensations of Providence⁵⁷, when we discover, that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is omitted in the law of Moses; it is darkly insinuated by the prophets, and during the long period which elapsed between the Egyptian and the Babylonian servitudes, the hopes as well as fears of the Jews appear to have been confined

⁵⁶ If we confine ourselves to the Gauls, we may observe, that they intrusted, not only their lives, but even their money, to the security of another world. *Vetus ille mos Gallorum occurrit* (says Valerius Maximus, l. ii. c. 6. p. 10.), *quos memoria proditur eis, pecunias mutuis, quæ his apud inferos redderentur, dare solitos.* The same custom is more darkly insinuated by Mela, l. iii. c. 2. It is almost needless to add, that the profits of trade hold a just proportion to the credit of the merchant, and that the Druids derived from their holy profession a character of responsibility, which could scarcely be claimed by any other order of men.

⁵⁷ The right reverend author of the Divine Legation of Moses assigns a very curious reason for the omission, and most ingeniously retorts it on the unbelievers.

within

within the narrow compass of the present life⁵⁸. After Cyrus had permitted the exiled nation to return into the promised land, and after Ezra had restored the ancient records of their religion, two celebrated sects, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, insensibly arose at Jerusalem⁵⁹. The former, selected from the more opulent and distinguished ranks of society, were strictly attached to the literal sense of the Mosaic law, and they piously rejected the immortality of the soul, as an opinion that received no countenance from the divine book, which they revered as the only rule of their faith. To the authority of scripture the Pharisees added that of tradition, and they accepted, under the name of traditions, several speculative tenets from the philosophy or religion of the eastern nations. The doctrines of fate or predestination, of angels and spirits, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, were in the number of these new articles of belief; and as the Pharisees, by the austerity of their manners, had drawn into their party the body of the Jewish people, the immortality of the soul became the prevailing sentiment of the synagogue, under the reign of the Asmonæan princes

⁵⁸ See Le Clerc (*Prolegomena ad Hist. Ecclesiast. sect. 1. c. 8.*). His authority seems to carry the greater weight, as he has written a learned and judicious commentary on the books of the Old Testament.

⁵⁹ Joseph. *Antiquitat. l. xiii. c. 10. De Bell. Jud. ii. 8.* According to the most natural interpretation of his words, the Sadducees admitted only the Pentateuch; but it has pleased some modern critics to add the prophets to their creed, and to suppose, that they contented themselves with rejecting the traditions of the Pharisees. Dr. Jortin has argued that point in his *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*, vol. ii. p. 103.

and

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and pontiffs. The temper of the Jews was incapable of contenting itself with such a cold and languid assent as might satisfy the mind of a Polytheist; and as soon as they admitted the idea of a future state, they embraced it with the zeal which has always formed the characteristic of the nation. Their zeal, however, added nothing to its evidence, or even probability: and it was still necessary, that the doctrine of life and immortality, which had been dictated by nature, approved by reason, and received by superstition, should obtain the sanction of divine truth from the authority and example of Christ.

among
the Chris-
tians.

When the promise of eternal happiness was proposed to mankind, on condition of adopting the faith, and of observing the precepts of the gospel, it is no wonder that so advantageous an offer should have been accepted by great numbers of every religion, of every rank, and of every province in the Roman Empire. The ancient Christians were animated by a contempt for their present existence, and by a just confidence of immortality, of which the doubtful and imperfect faith of modern ages cannot give us any adequate notion. In the primitive church, the influence of truth was very powerfully strengthened by an opinion, which, however it may deserve respect for its usefulness and antiquity, has not been found agreeable to experience. It was universally believed, that the end of the world, and the kingdom of Heaven, were at hand. The near approach of this wonderful event had been predicted by the apostles; the tradition of it

Approach-
ing end of
the world.

it was preserved by their earliest disciples, and those who understood in their literal sense the discourses of Christ himself, were obliged to expect the second and glorious coming of the Son of Man in the clouds, before that generation was totally extinguished, which had beheld his humble condition upon earth, and which might still be witness of the calamities of the Jews under Vespasian or Hadrian. The revolution of seventeen centuries has instructed us not to press too closely the mysterious language of prophecy and revelation; but as long as, for wise purposes, this error was permitted to subsist in the church, it was productive of the most salutary effects on the faith and practice of Christians, who lived in the awful expectation of that moment when the globe itself, and all the various race of mankind, should tremble at the appearance of their divine judge⁶⁰.

The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ. As the works of the creation had been finished in six days, their duration in their present state, according to a tradition which was attributed to the prophet Elijah, was fixed to six thousand years⁶¹. By the

Doctrine
of the Mil-
lennium.

⁶⁰ This expectation was countenanced by the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew, and by the first epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians. Erasmus removes the difficulty by the help of allegory and metaphor; and the learned Grotius ventures to insinuate, that, for wise purposes, the pious deception was permitted to take place.

⁶¹ See Burnet's Sacred Theory, part iii. c. 5. This tradition may be traced as high as the author of the Epistle of Barnabas, who wrote in the first century, and who seems to have been half a Jew.

same

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same analogy it was inferred, that this long period of labour and contention, which was now almost elapsed⁶², would be succeeded by a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years; and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon earth till the time appointed for the last and general resurrection. So pleasing was this hope to the mind of believers, that the *New Jerusalem*, the seat of this blissful kingdom, was quickly adorned with all the gayest colours of the imagination. A felicity consisting only of pure and spiritual pleasure would have appeared too refined for its inhabitants, who were still supposed to possess their human nature and senses. A garden of Eden, with the amusements of the pastoral life, was no longer suited to the advanced state of society which prevailed under the Roman empire. A city was therefore erected of gold and precious stones, and a supernatural plenty of corn and wine was bestowed on the adjacent territory; in the free enjoyment of whose spontaneous productions, the happy and benevolent

⁶² The primitive church of Antioch computed almost 6000 years from the creation of the world to the birth of Christ. Africanus, Lactantius, and the Greek church, have reduced that number to 5500, and Eusebius has contented himself with 5200 years. These calculations were formed on the Septuagint, which was universally received during the six first centuries. The authority of the Vulgate and of the Hebrew text has determined the moderns, Protestants as well as Catholics, to prefer a period of about 4000 years; though, in the study of profane antiquity, they often find themselves straitened by those narrow limits.

people was never to be restrained by any jealous laws of exclusive property⁶³. The assurance of such a Millennium was carefully inculcated by a succession of fathers from Justin Martyr⁶⁴ and Irenæus, who conversed with the immediate disciples of the apostles, down to Lactantius, who was preceptor to the son of Constantine⁶⁵. Though it might not be universally received, it appears to have been the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers; and it seems so well adapted to the desires and apprehensions of mankind, that it must have contributed in a very considerable degree to the progress of the Christian faith. But when the edifice of the church was almost completed, the temporary support was laid aside. The doctrine of Christ's reign upon earth was at first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism.

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⁶³ Most of these pictures were borrowed from a misinterpretation of Isaiah, Daniel, and the Apocalypse. One of the grossest images may be found in Irenæus (l. 5. p. 455.), the disciple of Papias, who had seen the apostle St. John.

⁶⁴ See the second dialogue of Justin with Tryphon, and the seventh book of Lactantius. It is unnecessary to allege all the intermediate fathers, as the fact is not disputed. Yet the curious reader may consult Daillé de Usu Patrum, l. ii. c. 4.

⁶⁵ The testimony of Justin, of his own faith and that of his orthodox brethren, in the doctrine of a Millennium, is delivered in the clearest and most solemn manner (Dialog. cum Tryphonte Jud. p. 177, 178. Edit. Benedictin.). If in the beginning of this important passage there is any thing like an inconsistency, we may impute it, as we think proper, either to the author or to his transcribers.

ticism.

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Confi-
gura-
tion of
Rome and
of the
world.

ticism⁶⁶. A mysterious prophecy, which still forms a part of the sacred canon, but which was thought to favour the exploded sentiment, has very narrowly escaped the proscription of the church⁶⁷.

Whilst the happiness and glory of a temporal reign were promised to the disciples of Christ, the most dreadful calamities were denounced against an unbelieving world. The edification of the new Jerusalem was to advance by equal steps with the destruction of the mystic Babylon; and as long as the emperors who reigned before Constantine persisted in the profession of idolatry, the epithet of Babylon was applied to the city and to the empire of Rome. A regular series

⁶⁶ Dupin, *Bibliothèque Ecclesiastique*, tom. i. p. 223. tom. ii. p. 366. and Mosheim, p. 720; though the latter of these learned divines is not altogether candid on this occasion.

⁶⁷ In the council of Laodicea (about the year 360) the Apocalypse was tacitly excluded from the sacred canon, by the same churches of Asia to which it is addressed; and we may learn from the complaint of Sulpicius Severus, that their sentence had been ratified by the greater number of Christians of his time. From what causes then is the Apocalypse at present so generally received by the Greek, the Roman, and the Protestant churches? The following ones may be assigned. 1. The Greeks were subdued by the authority of an impostor, who, in the sixth century, assumed the character of Dionysius the Areopagite. 2. A just apprehension, that the grammarians might become more important than the theologians, engaged the council of Trent to fix the seal of their infallibility on all the books of Scripture, contained in the Latin Vulgate, in the number of which the Apocalypse was fortunately included. (Frs Paolo, *Istoria del Concilio Tridentino*, l. ii.). 3. The advantage of turning those mysterious prophecies against the See of Rome, inspired the protestants with uncommon veneration for so useful an ally. See the ingenious and elegant discourses of the present bishop of Litchfield on that unpromising subject.

was

was prepared of all the moral and physical evils which can afflict a flourishing nation; intestine discord, and the invasion of the fiercest barbarians from the unknown regions of the North; pestilence and famine, comets and eclipses, earthquakes and inundations". All these were only so many preparatory and alarming signs of the great catastrophe of Rome, when the country of the Scipios and Cæsars should be consumed by a flame from Heaven, and the city of the seven hills, with her palaces, her temples, and her triumphal arches, should be buried in a vast lake of fire and brimstone. It might, however, afford some consolation to Roman vanity, that the period of their empire would be that of the world itself; which, as it had once perished by the element of water, was destined to experience a second and a speedy destruction from the element of fire. In the opinion of a general conflagration, the faith of the Christian very happily coincided with the tradition of the East, the philosophy of the Stoics, and the analogy of Nature; and even the country, which, from religious motives, had been chosen for the origin and principal scene of the conflagration, was the best adapted for that purpose by natural and physical causes; by its deep caverns, beds of sulphur, and numerous volcanoes, of which those of *Ætna*, of *Vesuvius*, and of *Lipari*, exhibit a very imperfect representation. The calmest and most

⁶⁸ Lactantius (*Institut. Divin.* vii. 13, &c.) relates the dismal tale of futurity with great spirit and eloquence.

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The Pa-  
gans de-  
voted to  
eternal pu-  
nishment.

intrepid sceptic could not refuse to acknowledge, that the destruction of the present system of the world by fire, was in itself extremely probable. The Christian, who founded his belief much less on the fallacious arguments of reason than on the authority of tradition and the interpretation of scripture, expected it with terror and confidence as a certain and approaching event; and as his mind was perpetually filled with the solemn idea, he considered every disaster that happened to the empire as an infallible symptom of an expiring world.<sup>69</sup>

The condemnation of the wisest and most virtuous of the Pagans, on account of their ignorance or disbelief of the divine truth, seems to offend the reason and the humanity of the present age.<sup>70</sup> But the primitive church, whose faith was of a much firmer consistence, delivered over, without hesitation, to eternal torture, the far greater part of the human species. A cha-

<sup>69</sup> On this subject every reader of taste will be entertained with the third part of Burnet's Sacred Theory. He blends philosophy, scripture, and tradition, into one magnificent system; in the description of which, he displays a strength of fancy not inferior to that of Milton himself.

<sup>70</sup> And yet whatever may be the language of individuals, it is still the public doctrine of all the Christian churches; nor can even our own refuse to admit the conclusions which must be drawn from the viith and the xviii of her Articles. The Jansenists, who have so diligently studied the works of the fathers, maintain this sentiment with distinguished zeal; and the learned M. de Tillemont never dismisses a virtuous emperor without pronouncing his damnation. Zuinglius is perhaps the only leader of a party who has ever adopted the milder sentiment, and he gave no less offence to the Lutherans than to the Catholics. See Bossuet, *Histoire des Variations des Eglises Protestantes*, l. ii. c. 39—42.

ridable hope might perhaps be indulged in favour of Socrates, or some other sages of antiquity, who had consulted the light of reason before that of the gospel had arisen?<sup>71</sup> But it was unanimously affirmed, that those who, since the birth or the death of Christ, had obstinately persisted in the worship of the demons, neither deserved nor could expect a pardon from the irritated justice of the Deity! These rigid sentiments, which had been unknown to the ancient world, appear to have infused a spirit of bitterness into a system of love and harmony. The ties of blood and friendship were frequently torn asunder by the difference of religious faith; and the Christians, who in this world found themselves oppressed by the power of the Pagans, were sometimes seduced by resentment and spiritual pride to delight in the prospect of their future triumph. "You are fond of spectacles," exclaims the stern Tertullian, "expect the greatest of all spectacles, the last and eternal judgment of the universe. How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many proud monarchs, and fancied gods, groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness; so many magistrates who persecuted the name of the Lord, liquefying in fiercer fires than they ever kindled against the Christians; so many sage philosophers blushing in red hot flames.

<sup>71</sup> Justin and Clemens of Alexandria allow that some of the philosophers were instructed by the Logos; confounding its double signification, of the human reason, and of the Divine Word.

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“ with their deluded scholars; so many celebrated poets trembling before the tribunal, not of Minos, but of Christ; so many tragedians, more tuneful in the expression of their own sufferings; so many dancers—!” But the humanity of the reader will permit me to draw a veil over the rest of this infernal description, which the zealous African pursues in a long variety of affected and unfeeling witticisms<sup>72</sup>.

Were often  
converted  
by their  
fears.

Doubtless there were many among the primitive Christians of a temper more suitable to the meekness and charity of their profession. There were many who felt a sincere compassion for the danger of their friends and countrymen, and who exerted the most benevolent zeal to save them from the impending destruction. The careless Polytheist, assailed by new and unexpected terrors, against which neither his priests nor his philosophers could afford him any certain protection, was very frequently terrified and subdued by the menace of eternal tortures. His fears might assist the progress of his faith and reason; and if he could once persuade himself to suspect that the Christian religion might possibly be true, it became an easy task to convince him

<sup>72</sup> Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, c. 30. In order to ascertain the degree of authority which the zealous African had acquired, it may be sufficient to allege the testimony of Cyprian, the doctor and guide of all the western churches. (See Prudent. *Hymn*. xiii. 100.) As often as he applied himself to his daily study of the writings of Tertullian, he was accustomed to say, “*Da mihi magistram*; Give me my master.” (Hieronym. *de Viris Illustribus*, tom. i. p. 284.)

that

that it was the safest and most prudent party that he could possibly embrace.

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THE  
THIRD  
CAUSE.  
Miraculous powers of the primitive church.

III. The supernatural gifts, which even in this life were ascribed to the Christians above the rest of mankind, must have conduced to their own comfort, and very frequently to the conviction of infidels. Besides the occasional prodigies, which might sometimes be effected by the immediate interposition of the Deity when he suspended the laws of Nature for the service of religion, the Christian church, from the time of the apostles and their first disciples<sup>73</sup>, has claimed an uninterrupted succession of miraculous powers, the gift of tongues, of vision and of prophecy, the power of expelling dæmons, of healing the sick, and of raising the dead. The knowledge of foreign languages was frequently communicated to the contemporaries of Irenæus, though Irenæus himself was left to struggle with the difficulties of a barbarous dialect whilst he preached the gospel to the natives of Gaul<sup>74</sup>. The divine inspiration, whether it was conveyed in the form of a waking or of a sleeping vision, is described as a favour very liberally bestowed on all ranks of the faithful, on women as on elders, on boys as well as upon bishops. When

<sup>73</sup> Notwithstanding the evasions of Dr. Middleton, it is impossible to overlook the clear traces of visions and inspiration, which may be found in the apostolic fathers.

<sup>74</sup> Irenæus adv. Hæres. Proem. p. 3. Dr. Middleton (*Free Inquiry*, p. 96, &c.) observes, that as this pretension of all others was the most difficult to support by art, it was the soonest given up. The observation suits his hypothesis.

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their devout minds were sufficiently prepared by a course of prayer, of fasting, and of vigils, to receive the extraordinary impulse, they were transported out of their senses, and delivered in extasy what was inspired, being mere organs of the holy spirit, just as a pipe or flute is of him who blows into it<sup>75</sup>. We may add, that the design of these visions was, for the most part, either to disclose the future history, or to guide the present administration of the church. The expulsion of the dæmons from the bodies of those unhappy persons whom they had been permitted to torment, was considered as a signal though ordinary triumph of religion, and is repeatedly alleged by the ancient apologists, as the most convincing evidence of the truth of Christianity. The awful ceremony was usually performed in a public manner, and in the presence of a great number of spectators; the patient was relieved by the power or skill of the exorcist, and the vanquished dæmon was heard to confess, that he was one of the fabled gods of antiquity, who had impiously usurped the adoration of mankind!<sup>76</sup>. But the miraculous cure of diseases of the most inveterate or even preternatural kind, can no longer occasion any surprise, when we recollect,

<sup>75</sup> Athenagoras in *Legatione*. Justin Martyr, *Cohort. ad Gentes*. Tertullian *advers. Marcionit.* l. iv. These descriptions are not very unlike the prophetic fury, for which Cicero (*de Divinat.* ii. 54.) expresses so little reverence.

<sup>76</sup> Tertullian (*Apolog.* c. 23.) throws out a bold defiance to the Pagan magistrates. Of the primitive miracles, the power of exorcising is the only one which has been assumed by Protestants.

that

that in the days of Irenæus, about the end of the second century, the resurrection of the dead was very far from being esteemed an uncommon event; that the miracle was frequently performed on necessary occasions, by great fasting and the joint supplication of the church of the place, and that the persons thus restored to their prayers, had lived afterwards among them many years". At such a period, when faith could boast of so many wonderful victories over death, it seems difficult to account for the scepticism of those philosophers, who still rejected and derided the doctrine of the resurrection. A noble Grecian had rested on this important ground the whole controversy, and promised Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, that if he could be gratified with the sight of a single person who had been actually raised from the dead, he would immediately embrace the Christian religion. It is somewhat remarkable, that the prelate of the first eastern church, however anxious for the conversion of his friend, thought proper to decline this fair and reasonable challenge".

The miracles of the primitive church, after obtaining the sanction of ages, have been lately attacked in a very free and ingenious inquiry";

Their truth  
contested.

77 Irenæus *adv. Hæreses*, l. ii. 56, 57. l. v. c. 6. Mr. Dodwell (*Dissertat. ad Irenæum*, ii. 42.) concludes, that the second century was still more fertile in miracles than the first.

78 Theophilus *ad Autolycom*, l. i. p. 345. Edit. Benedictina. Paris, 1742.

79 Dr. Middleton sent out his Introduction in the year 1747, published his Free Inquiry in 1749, and before his death, which happened in 1750, he had prepared a vindication of it against his numerous adversaries.

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Our perplexity in defining the miraculous period.

which, though it has met with the most favourable reception from the Public, appears to have excited a general scandal among the divines of our own as well as of the other protestant churches of Europe<sup>so</sup>. Our different sentiments on this subject will be much less influenced by any particular arguments, than by our habits of study and reflection; and above all, by the degree of the evidence which we have accustomed ourselves to require for the proof of a miraculous event.

The duty of an historian does not call upon him to interpose his private judgment in this nice and important controversy; but he ought not to dissimble the difficulty of adopting such a theory as may reconcile the interest of religion with that of reason, of making a proper application of that theory, and of defining with precision the limits of that happy period exempt from error and from deceit, to which we might be disposed to extend the gift of supernatural powers. From the first of the fathers to the last of the popes, a succession of bishops, of saints, of martyrs, and of miracles, is continued without interruption, and the progress of superstition was so gradual and almost imperceptible, that we know not in what particular link we should break the chain of tradition. Every age bears testimony to the wonderful events by which it was distinguished, and its testimony appears no less weighty and respectable

<sup>so</sup> The university of Oxford conferred degrees on his opponents. From the indignation of Mosheim (p. 221.), we may discover the sentiments of the Lutheran divines.

than

than that of the preceding generation, till we are insensibly led on to accuse our own inconsistency, if in the eighth or in the twelfth century we deny to the venerable Bede, or to the holy Bernard, the same degree of confidence which, in the second century, we had so liberally granted to Justin or to Irenæus<sup>81</sup>. If the truth of any of those miracles is appreciated by their apparent use and propriety, every age had unbelievers to convince, heretics to confute, and idolatrous nations to convert; and sufficient motives might always be produced to justify the interposition of Heaven. And yet since every friend to revelation is persuaded of the reality, and every reasonable man is convinced of the cessation, of miraculous powers, it is evident that there must have been *some period* in which they were either suddenly or gradually withdrawn from the Christian church. Whatever æra is chosen for that purpose, the death of the apostles, the conversion of the Roman empire, or the extinction of the Arian heresy<sup>82</sup>, the insensibility of the Christians who lived at that time will equally afford a just matter of surprise. They still supported their pretensions after they had lost their power,

<sup>81</sup> It may seem somewhat remarkable, that Bernard of Clairvaux, who records so many miracles of his friend St. Malachi, never takes any notice of his own, which, in their turn, however, are carefully related by his companions and disciples. In the long series of ecclesiastical history, does there exist a single instance of a saint asserting that he himself possessed the gift of miracles?

<sup>82</sup> The conversion of Constantine is the æra which is most usually fixed by protestants. The more rational divines are unwilling to admit the miracles of the ivth, whilst the more credulous are unwilling to reject those of the vth century,

Credulity

CHAP. XV. Credulity performed the office of faith; fanaticism was permitted to assume the language of inspiration, and the effects of accident or contrivance were ascribed to supernatural causes. The recent experience of genuine miracles should have instructed the Christian world in the ways of Providence, and habituated their eye (if we may use a very inadequate expression) to the style of the divine artist. Should the most skillful painter of modern Italy presume to decorate his feeble imitations with the name of Raphael or of Correggio, the insolent fraud would be soon discovered and indignantly rejected.

Use of the  
primitive  
miracles.

Whatever opinion may be entertained of the miracles of the primitive church since the time of the apostles, this unresisting softness of temper, so conspicuous among the believers of the second and third centuries, proved of some accidental benefit to the cause of truth and religion. In modern times, a latent and even involuntary scepticism adheres to the most pious dispositions. Their admission of supernatural truths is much less an active consent, than a cold and passive acquiescence. Accustomed long since to observe and to respect the invariable order of Nature, our reason, or at least our imagination, is not sufficiently prepared to sustain the visible action of the Deity. But, in the first ages of Christianity, the situation of mankind was extremely different. The most curious, or the most credulous, among the Pagans, were often persuaded to enter into a society, which asserted an actual claim of miraculous powers. The primitive Christians

Christians perpetually trod on mystic ground, and their minds were exercised by the habits of believing the most extraordinary events. They felt, or they fancied, that on every side they were incessantly assaulted by dæmons, comforted by visions, instructed by prophecy, and surprisingly delivered from danger, sickness, and from death itself, by the supplications of the church. The real or imaginary prodigies, of which they so frequently conceived themselves to be the objects, the instruments, or the spectators, very happily disposed them to adopt with the same ease, but with far greater justice, the authentic wonders of the evangèlic history; and thus miracles that exceeded not the measure of their own experience, inspired them with the most lively assurance of mysteries which were acknowledged to surpass the limits of their understanding. It is this deep impression of supernatural truths, which has been so much celebrated under the name of faith; a state of mind described as the surest pledge of the divine favour and of future felicity, and recommended as the first or perhaps the only merit of a Christian. According to the more rigid doctors, the moral virtues, which may be equally practised by infidels, are destitute of any value or efficacy in the work of our justification.

IV. But the primitive Christian demonstrated his faith by his virtues; and it was very justly supposed that the divine persuasion which enlightened or subdued the understanding, must, at the same time, purify the heart and direct the actions

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THE  
FOURTH  
CAUSE.  
Virtues of  
the first  
Christians.

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actions of the believer. The first apologists of Christianity who justify the innocence of their brethren, and the writers of a later period who celebrate the sanctity of their ancestors, display, in the most lively colours, the reformation of manners which was introduced into the world by the preaching of the gospel. As it is my intention to remark only such human causes as were permitted to second the influence of revelation, I shall slightly mention two motives which might naturally render the lives of the primitive Christians much purer and more austere than those of their Pagan contemporaries, or their degenerate successors; repentance for their past sins, and the laudable desire of supporting the reputation of the society in which they were engaged.

Effects of  
their re-  
pentance.

It is a very ancient reproach, suggested by the ignorance or the malice of infidelity, that the Christians allured into their party the most atrocious criminals, who, as soon as they were touched by a sense of remorse, were easily persuaded to wash away, in the water of baptism, the guilt of their past conduct, for which the temples of the gods refused to grant them any expiation. But this reproach, when it is cleared from misrepresentation, contributes as much to the honour as it did to the increase of the church<sup>23</sup>. The friends of Christianity may acknowledge without a blush, that many of the most eminent

<sup>23</sup> The imputations of Celsus and Julian, with the defence of the fathers, are very fairly stated by Spanheim, *Commentaire sur les Celsus de Julian*, p. 468.

saints had been before their baptism the most abandoned sinners. Those persons, who in the world had followed, though in an imperfect manner, the dictates of benevolence and propriety, derived such a calm satisfaction from the opinion of their own rectitude, as rendered them much less susceptible of the sudden emotions of shame, of grief, and of terror, which have given birth to so many wonderful conversions. After the example of their Divine Master, the missionaries of the gospel disdained not the society of men, and especially of women, oppressed by the consciousness, and very often by the effects, of their vices. As they emerged from sin and superstition to the glorious hope of immortality, they resolved to devote themselves to a life, not only of virtue, but of penitence. The desire of perfection became the ruling passion of their soul; and it is well known, that while reason embraces a cold mediocrity, our passions hurry us, with rapid violence, over the space which lies between the most opposite extremes.

When the new converts had been enrolled in the number of the faithful, and were admitted to the sacraments of the church, they found themselves restrained from relapsing into their past disorders by another consideration of a less spiritual, but of a very innocent and respectable nature. Any particular society that has departed from the great body of the nation, or the religion to which it belonged, immediately becomes the object of universal as well as invidious observation. In proportion to the smallness of its numbers,

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Care of  
their reputa-  
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bers, the character of the society may be affected by the virtue and vices of the persons who compose it; and every member is engaged to watch with the most vigilant attention over his own behaviour, and over that of his brethren, since, as he must expect to incur a part of the common disgrace, he may hope to enjoy a share of the common reputation. When the Christians of Bithynia were brought before the tribunal of the younger Pliny, they assured the proconsul, that, far from being engaged in any unlawful conspiracy, they were bound by a solemn obligation to abstain from the commission of those crimes which disturb the private or public peace of society, from theft, robbery, adultery, perjury, and fraud<sup>84</sup>. Near a century afterwards, Tertullian, with an honest pride, could boast, that very few Christians had suffered by the hand of the executioner, except on account of their religion<sup>85</sup>. Their serious and sequestered life, averse to the gay luxury of the age, inured them to chastity, temperance, œconomy, and all the sober and domestic virtues. As the greater number were of some trade or profession, it was incumbent on them, by the strictest integrity and the fairest dealing, to remove the suspicions which the profane are too apt to conceive against the appearances of sanctity. The contempt of the world exercised them in the habits of humi-

<sup>84</sup> Plin. Epist. x. 97.<sup>85</sup> Tertullian, Apolog. c. 44. He adds, however, with some degree of hesitation, "Aut si aliud, jam non Christianus."

lity,

lity, meekness, and patience. The more they were persecuted, the more closely they adhered to each other. Their mutual charity and unsuspecting confidence has been remarked by infidels, and was too often abused by perfidious friends.<sup>86</sup>

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It is a very honourable circumstance for the morals of the primitive Christians, that even their faults, or rather errors; were derived from an excess of virtue. The bishops and doctors of the church, whose evidence attests, and whose authority might influence the professions, the principles, and even the practice, of their contemporaries, had studied the scriptures with less skill than devotion, and they often received, in the most literal sense, those rigid precepts of Christ and the apostles, to which the prudence of succeeding commentators has applied a looser and more figurative mode of interpretation. Ambitious to exalt the perfection of the gospel above the wisdom of philosophy, the zealous fathers have carried the duties of self-mortification, of purity, and of patience, to a height which it is scarcely possible to attain, and much less to preserve, in our present state of weakness and corruption. A doctrine so extraordinary and so sublime must inevitably command the veneration of the people; but it was ill calculated to obtain the suffrage of those worldly philosophers, who, in the conduct of this transitory life, con-

Morality  
of the fa-  
thers.

<sup>86</sup> The philosopher Peregrinus (of whose life and death Lucian has left us so entertaining an account) imposed, for a long time, on the credulous simplicity of the Christians of Asia.

sult

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Principles  
of human  
nature,

sult only the feelings of nature and the interest of society<sup>97</sup>.

There are two very natural propensities which we may distinguish in the most virtuous and liberal dispositions, the love of pleasure and the love of action. If the former be refined by art and learning, improved by the charms of social intercourse, and corrected by a just regard to oeconomy, to health, and to reputation, it is productive of the greatest part of the happiness of private life. The love of action is a principle of a much stronger and more doubtful nature. It often leads to anger, to ambition, and to revenge; but when it is guided by the sense of propriety and benevolence, it becomes the parent of every virtue; and if those virtues are accompanied with equal abilities, a family, a state, or an empire, may be indebted for their safety and prosperity to the undaunted courage of a single man. To the love of pleasure we may therefore ascribe most of the agreeable, to the love of action we may attribute most of the useful and respectable, qualifications. The character in which both the one and the other should be united and harmonised, would seem to constitute the most perfect idea of human nature. The insensible and inactive disposition, which should be supposed alike destitute of both, would be rejected, by the common consent of mankind, as utterly incapable of procuring any happiness

<sup>97</sup> See a very judicious treatise of Barbeyrac sur la Morale des Pers.

to the individual, or any public benefit to the world. C H A P.  
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But it was not in *this* world that the primitive Christians were desirous of making themselves either agreeable or useful.

The acquisition of knowledge, the exercise of our reason or fancy, and the cheerful flow of unguarded conversation, may employ the leisure of a liberal mind. Such amusements, however, were rejected with abhorrence, or admitted with the utmost caution, by the severity of the fathers, who despised all knowledge that was not useful to salvation, and who considered all levity of discourse as a criminal abuse of the gift of speech. In our present state of existence the body is so inseparably connected with the soul, that it seems to be our interest to taste, with innocence and moderation, the enjoyments of which that faithful companion is susceptible. Very different was the reasoning of our devout predecessors; vainly aspiring to imitate the perfection of angels, they disdained, or they affected to disdain, every earthly and corporeal delight<sup>88</sup>. Some of our senses indeed are necessary for our preservation, others for our subsistence, and others again for our information, and thus far it was impossible to reject the use of them. The first sensation of pleasure was marked as the first moment of their abuse. The unfeeling candidate for Heaven was instructed, not only to resist the grosser allurements of the taste or smell, but even to shut his ears against the pro-

The primitive Christians condemn pleasure and luxury.

<sup>88</sup> Lactant. Institut. Divin. l. vi. c. 20, 21, 22.

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fane harmony of sounds, and to view with indifference the most finished productions of human art. Gay apparel, magnificent houses, and elegant furniture, were supposed to unite the double guilt of pride and of sensuality: a simple and mortified appearance was more suitable to the Christian who was certain of his sins and doubtful of his salvation. In their censures of luxury, the fathers are extremely minute and circumstantial<sup>89</sup>; and among the various articles which excite their pious indignation, we may enumerate false hair, garments of any colour except white, instruments of music, vases of gold or silver, downy pillows (as Jacob reposed his head on a stone), white bread, foreign wines, public salutations, the use of warm baths, and the practice of shaving the beard, which, according to the expression of Tertullian, is a lie against our own faces, and an impious attempt to improve the works of the Creator<sup>90</sup>. When Christianity was introduced among the rich and the polite, the observation of these singular laws was left, as it would be at present, to the few who were ambitious of superior sanctity. But it is always easy, as well as agreeable, for the inferior ranks of mankind to claim a merit from the contempt of that pomp and pleasure, which fortune has placed beyond their reach. The virtue of the

<sup>89</sup> Consult a work of Clemens of Alexandria, intitled the *Pædagogus*, which contains the rudiments of ethics, as they were taught in the most celebrated of the Christian schools.

<sup>90</sup> Tertullian, de *Spectaculis*, c. 23. Clemens Alexandria. *Pædagog.* l. iii. c. 8.

primi-

primitive Christians, like that of the first Romans, was very frequently guarded by poverty and ignorance. C H A P.  
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The chaste severity of the fathers, in whatever related to the commerce of the two sexes, flowed from the same principle; their abhorrence of every enjoyment which might gratify the sensual, and degrade the spiritual, nature of man. It was their favourite opinion, that if Adam had preserved his obedience to the Creator, he would have lived for ever in a state of virgin purity, and that some harmless mode of vegetation might have peopled paradise with a race of innocent and immortal beings<sup>91</sup>. The use of marriage was permitted only to his fallen posterity, as a necessary expedient to continue the human species, and as a restraint, however imperfect, on the natural licentiousness of desire. The hesitation of the orthodox casuists on this interesting subject, betrays the perplexity of men, unwilling to approve an institution, which they were compelled to tolerate<sup>92</sup>. The enumeration of the very whimsical laws, which they most circumstantially imposed on the marriage-bed, would force a smile from the young, and a blush from the fair. It was their unanimous sentiment, that a first marriage was adequate to all the purposes of nature and of society. The sensual connexion was refined into a resemblance of the mystic

Their sentiments concerning marriage and chastity.

<sup>91</sup> Beausobre, *Hist. Critique du Manichéisme*, l. vii. c. 3. Justin, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustin, &c. strongly inclined to this opinion.

<sup>92</sup> Some of the Gnostic heretics were more consistent; they rejected the use of marriage.

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union of Christ with his church, and was pronounced to be indissoluble either by divorce or by death. The practice of second nuptials was branded with the name of a legal adultery; and the persons who were guilty of so scandalous an offence against Christian purity, were soon excluded from the honours, and even from the alms, of the church<sup>93</sup>. Since desire was imputed as a crime, and marriage was tolerated as a defect, it was consistent with the same principles to consider a state of celibacy as the nearest approach to the divine perfection. It was with the utmost difficulty that ancient Rome could support the institution of six vestals<sup>94</sup>; but the primitive church was filled with a great number of persons of either sex, who had devoted themselves to the profession of perpetual chastity<sup>95</sup>. A few of these, among whom we may reckon the learned Origen, judged it the most prudent to disarm the tempter<sup>96</sup>. Some

<sup>93</sup> See a chain of tradition, from Justin Martyr to Jerome, in the *Morale des Peres*; c. iv. 6—26.

<sup>94</sup> See a very curious Dissertation on the Vestals, in the *Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions*, tom. iv. p. 161—227. Notwithstanding the honours and rewards which were bestowed on those virgins, it was difficult to procure a sufficient number; nor could the dread of the most horrible death always restrain their incontinence.

<sup>95</sup> *Cupiditatem procreandi aut unam scimus aut nullam. Miræus Fælix*, c. 31. *Justin. Apolog. Major. Athenagoras in Legat.* c. 28. *Tertullian de Cultu Fœmin.* l. ii.

<sup>96</sup> Eusebius, l. vi. 2. Before the fame of Origen had excited envy and persecution, this extraordinary action was rather admired than censured. As it was his general practice to allegorize scripture; it seems unfortunate that, in this instance only, he should have adopted the literal sense.

were

were insensible and some were invincible against the assaults of the flesh. Disdaining an ignominious flight, the virgins of the warm climate of Africa encountered the enemy in the closest engagement; they permitted priests and deacons to share their bed, and gloried amidst the flames of their un sullied purity. But insulted Nature sometimes vindicated her rights, and this new species of martyrdom served only to introduce a new scandal into the church<sup>97</sup>. Among the Christian ascetics, however (a name which they soon acquired from their painful exercise), many, as they were less presumptuous, were probably more successful. The loss of sensual pleasure was supplied and compensated by spiritual pride. Even the multitude of Pagans were inclined to estimate the merit of the sacrifice by its apparent difficulty; and it was in the praise of these chaste spouses of Christ that the fathers have poured forth the troubled stream of their eloquence<sup>98</sup>. Such are the early traces of monastic principles and institutions, which, in a subsequent age, have counterbalanced all the temporal advantages of Christianity<sup>99</sup>.

<sup>97</sup> Cyprian Epist. 4. and Dodwell Dissertat. Cypriana, iii. Something like this rash attempt was long afterwards imputed to the founder of the order of Fontevault. Bayle has amused himself and his readers on that very delicate subject.

<sup>98</sup> Dupin (*Bibliothèque Ecclésiastique*, tom i. p. 195.) gives a particular account of the dialogue of the ten virgins, as it was composed by Methodius, bishop of Ilye. The praise of virginity are excessive.

<sup>99</sup> The Ascetics (as early as the second century) made a public profession of mortifying their bodies, and of abstaining from the use of flesh and wine. Melsheim, p. 310.

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Their aver-  
sion to the  
business of  
war and  
govern-  
ment.

The Christians were not less averse to the business than to the pleasures of this world. The defence of our persons and property they knew not how to reconcile with the patient doctrine which enjoined an unlimited forgiveness of past injuries, and commanded them to invite the repetition of fresh insults. Their simplicity was offended by the use of oaths, by the pomp of magistracy, and by the active contention of public life, nor could their humane ignorance be convinced, that it was lawful on any occasion to shed the blood of our fellow-creatures, either by the sword of justice, or by that of war; even though their criminal or hostile attempts should threaten the peace and safety of the whole community<sup>100</sup>. It was acknowledged, that under a less perfect law, the powers of the Jewish constitution had been exercised, with the approbation of Heaven, by inspired prophets and by anointed kings. The Christians felt and confessed, that such institutions might be necessary for the present system of the world, and they cheerfully submitted to the authority of their Pagan governors. But while they inculcated the maxims of passive obedience, they refused to take any active part in the civil administration or the military defence of the empire. Some indulgence might perhaps be allowed to those persons

<sup>100</sup> See the *Morale des Peres*. The same patient principles have been revived since the Reformation by the Socinians, the modern Anabaptists, and the Quakers. Barclay, the apologist of the Quakers, has protected his brethren, by the authority of the primitive Christians, p. 542—549.

who, before their conversion, were already engaged in such violent and sanguinary occupations<sup>101</sup>; but it was impossible that the Christians, without renouncing a more sacred duty, could assume the character of soldiers, of magistrates, or of princes<sup>102</sup>. This indolent, or even criminal disregard to the public welfare, exposed them to the contempt and reproaches of the Pagans, who very frequently asked, what must be the fate of the empire, attacked on every side by the barbarians, if all mankind should adopt the pusillanimous sentiments of the new sect<sup>103</sup>? To this insulting question the Christian apologists returned obscure and ambiguous answers, as they were unwilling to reveal the secret cause of their security; the expectation that, before the conversion of mankind was accomplished, war, government, the Roman empire, and the world itself, would be no more. It may be observed, that, in this instance likewise, the situation of the first Christians coincided very happily with their religious scruples, and that their aversion to an active life contributed rather to excuse them from the service, than to exclude them from the honours, of the state and army.

<sup>101</sup> Tertullian, Apolog. c. 21. De Idololatriâ, c. 17, 18. Origen contra Celsum, l. v. p. 253. l. vii. p. 348. l. viii. p. 423—428.

<sup>102</sup> Tertullian (de Coronâ Militis, c. 11.) suggests to them the expedient of deserting; a counsel, which, if it had been generally known, was not very proper to conciliate the favour of the emperors towards the Christian sect.

<sup>103</sup> As well as we can judge from the mutilated representation of Origen (l. viii. p. 423.), his adversary, Celsus, had urged his objection with great force and candour.

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**THE  
FIFTH  
CAUSE.**

The Christians active  
in the government  
of the church.

V. But the human character, however it may be exalted or depressed by a temporary enthusiasm, will return by degrees to its proper and natural level, and will resume those passions that seem the most adapted to its present condition. The primitive Christians were dead to the business and pleasures of the world; but their love of action, which could never be entirely extinguished, soon revived, and found a new occupation in the government of the church. A separate society, which attacked the established religion of the empire, was obliged to adopt some form of internal policy, and to appoint a sufficient number of ministers, intrusted not only with the spiritual functions, but even with the temporal direction of the Christian commonwealth. The safety of that society, its honour, its aggrandisement, were productive, even in the most pious minds, of a spirit of patriotism, such as the first of the Romans had felt for the republic, and sometimes, of a similar indifference, in the use of whatever means might probably conduce to so desirable an end. The ambition of raising themselves or their friends to the honours and offices of the church, was disguised by the laudable intention of devoting to the public benefit, the power and consideration, which, for that purpose only, it became their duty to solicit. In the exercise of their functions, they were frequently called upon to detect the errors of heresy, or the arts of faction, to oppose the designs of perfidious brethren, to stigmatize their characters

ters with deserved infamy, and to expel them from the bosom of a society, whose peace and happiness they had attempted to disturb. The ecclesiastical governors of the Christians were taught to unite the wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove; but as the former was refined, so the latter was insensibly corrupted, by the habits of government. In the church as well as in the world, the persons who were placed in any public station rendered themselves considerable by their eloquence and firmness, by their knowledge of mankind, and by their dexterity in business; and while they concealed from others, and perhaps from themselves, the secret motives of their conduct, they too frequently relapsed into all the turbulent passions of active life, which were tinged with an additional degree of bitterness and obstinacy from the infusion of spiritual zeal.

The government of the church has often been the subject, as well as the prize, of religious contention. The hostile disputants of Rome, of Paris, of Oxford, and of Geneva, have alike struggled to reduce the primitive and apostolic model<sup>104</sup>, to the respective standards of their own policy. The few who have pursued this inquiry with more candour and impartiality, are of opinion<sup>105</sup>, that the apostles declined the office of

Its primitive freedom and equality.

<sup>104</sup> The aristocratical party in France, as well as in England, has strenuously maintained the divine origin of bishops. But the Calvinistical presbyters were impatient of a superior; and the Roman Pontiff refused to acknowledge an equal. See Fra Paolo.

<sup>105</sup> In the history of the Christian hierarchy, I have, for the most part, followed the learned and candid Mosheim.

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legislation, and rather chose to endure some partial scandals and divisions, than to exclude the Christians of a future age from the liberty of varying their forms of ecclesiastical government according to the changes of times and circumstances. The scheme of policy, which, under their approbation, was adopted for the use of the first century, may be discovered from the practice of Jerusalem, of Ephesus, or of Corinth. The societies which were instituted in the cities of the Roman empire, were united only by the ties of faith and charity. Independence and equality formed the basis of their internal constitution. The want of discipline and human learning was supplied by the occasional assistance of the *prophets*<sup>106</sup>, who were called to that function without distinction of age, of sex, or of natural abilities, and who, as often as they felt the divine impulse, poured forth the effusions of the spirit in the assembly of the faithful. But these extraordinary gifts were frequently abused or misapplied by the prophetic teachers. They displayed them at an improper season, presumptuously disturbed the service of the assembly, and by their pride or mistaken zeal they introduced, particularly into the apostolic church of Corinth, a long and melancholy train of disorders<sup>107</sup>. As the institution of prophets became useless,

<sup>106</sup> For the prophets of the primitive church, see Mosheim, *Dissertationes ad Hist. Eccles. pertinentes*, tom. ii. p. 132—208.

<sup>107</sup> See the epistles of St. Paul, and of Clemens, to the Corinthians.

and

and even pernicious, their powers were withdrawn, and their office abolished. The public functions of religion were solely intrusted to the established ministers of the church, the *bishops* and the *presbyters*; two appellations, which, in their first origin, appear to have distinguished the same office and the same order of persons. The name of Presbyter was expressive of their age, or rather of their gravity and wisdom. The title of Bishop denoted their inspection over the faith and manners of the Christians who were committed to their pastoral care. In proportion to the respective numbers of the faithful, a larger or smaller number of these *episcopal presbyters* guided each infant congregation with equal authority, and with united counsels<sup>103</sup>.

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But the most perfect equality of freedom requires the directing hand of a superior magistrate; and the order of public deliberations soon introduces the office of a president, invested at least with the authority of collecting the sentiments, and of executing the resolutions, of the assembly. A regard for the public tranquillity, which would so frequently have been interrupted by annual or by occasional elections, induced the primitive Christians to constitute an honourable and perpetual magistracy, and to choose one of the wisest and most holy among their presbyters to execute, during his life, the duties of their ecclesiastical governor. It was under these circumstances that

Institution  
of bishops  
as pre-  
sidents of  
the college  
of presby-  
ters.

<sup>103</sup> Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, l. vii.

the

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the lofty title of Bishop began to raise itself above the humble appellation of Presbyter; and while the latter remained the most natural distinction for the members of every Christian senate, the former was appropriated to the dignity of its new president<sup>109</sup>. The advantages of this episcopal form of government, which appears to have been introduced before the end of the first century<sup>110</sup>, were so obvious, and so important for the future greatness, as well as the present peace, of Christianity, that it was adopted without delay by all the societies which were already scattered over the empire, had acquired in a very early period the sanction of antiquity<sup>111</sup>; and is still revered by the most powerful churches, both of the East and of the West, as a primitive and even as a divine establishment<sup>112</sup>. It is needless to observe, that the pious and humble

<sup>109</sup> See Jerome ad Titum, c. 2. and Epistol. 85. (in the Benedictine edition, 101.) and the elaborate apology of Blondel, *pro sententia Hieronymi*. The ancient state, as it is described by Jerome, of the bishop and presbyters of Alexandria, receives a remarkable confirmation from the patriarch Eutychius (*Annal.* tom. i. p. 330. Verl. Pocock); whose testimony I know not how to reject, in spite of all the objections of the learned Pearson in his *Vindiciæ Ignatianæ*, part i. c. 22.

<sup>110</sup> See the introduction to the Apocalypse. Bishops, under the name of angels, were already instituted in seven cities of Asia. And yet the epistle of Clemens (which is probably of as ancient a date) does not lead us to discover any traces of episcopacy either at Corinth or Rome.

<sup>111</sup> *Nulla Ecclesia sine Episcopo*, has been a fact as well as a maxim since the time of Tertullian and Irenæus.

<sup>112</sup> After we have passed the difficulties of the first century, we find the episcopal government universally established, till it was interrupted by the republican genius of the Swiss and German reformers.

presby-

presbyters, who were first dignified with the episcopal title, could not possess, and would probably have rejected, the power and pomp which now encircles the tiara of the Roman pontiff, or the mitre of a German prelate. But we may define, in a few words, the narrow limits of their original jurisdiction, which was chiefly of a spiritual, though in some instances of a temporal, nature<sup>113</sup>. It consisted in the administration of the sacraments and discipline of the church, the superintendency of religious ceremonies, which imperceptibly increased in number and variety, the consecration of ecclesiastical ministers, to whom the bishop assigned their respective functions, the management of the public fund, and the determination of all such differences as the faithful were unwilling to expose before the tribunal of an idolatrous judge. These powers, during a short period, were exercised according to the advice of the presbyteral college, and with the consent and approbation of the assembly of Christians. The primitive bishops were considered only as the first of their equals, and the honourable servants of a free people. Whenever the episcopal chair became vacant by death, a new president was chosen among the presbyters by the suffrage of the whole congregation, every

<sup>113</sup> See Mosheim in the first and second centuries. Ignatius (ad Smyrænos, c. 3, &c.) is full of exalting the episcopal dignity. Le Clerc (Hist. Eccles. p. 569.) very bluntly censures his conduct. Mosheim, with a more critical judgment (p. 161.), suspects the purity even of the smaller epistles.

member

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Provincial  
councils.

member of which supposed himself invested with a sacred and sacerdotal character<sup>114</sup>.

Such was the mild and equal constitution by which the Christians were governed more than an hundred years after the death of the apostles. Every society formed within itself a separate and independent republic: and although the most distant of these little states maintained a mutual as well as friendly intercourse of letters and deputations, the Christian world was not yet connected by any supreme authority or legislative assembly. As the numbers of the faithful were gradually multiplied, they discovered the advantages that might result from a closer union of their interest and designs. Towards the end of the second century, the churches of Greece and Asia adopted the useful institutions of provincial synods, and they may justly be supposed to have borrowed the model of a representative council from the celebrated examples of their own country, the Amphiçtyons, the Achæan league, or the assemblies of the Ionian cities. It was soon established as a custom and as a law, that the bishops of the independent churches should meet in the capital of the province at the stated periods of spring and autumn. Their deliberations were assisted by the advice of a few distinguished presbyters, and moderated by the presence of a

<sup>114</sup> Nonne et Laici sacerdotes sumus? Tertullian, Exhort. ad Castitat. c. 7. As the human heart is still the same, several of the observations which Mr. Hume has made on Enthusiasm (*Essays*, vol. i. p. 76. quarto edit.), may be applied even to real inspiration.

listening

listening multitude<sup>115</sup>. Their decrees, which were styled Canons, regulated every important controversy of faith and discipline; and it was natural to believe that a liberal effusion of the holy spirit would be poured on the united assembly of the delegates of the Christian people. The institution of synods was so well suited to private ambition and to public interest, that in the space of a few years it was received throughout the whole empire. A regular correspondence was established between the provincial councils, which mutually communicated and approved their respective proceedings; and the catholic church soon assumed the form, and acquired the strength, of a great fœderative republic<sup>116</sup>.

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Union of  
the church.

As the legislative authority of the particular churches was insensibly superseded by the use of councils, the bishops obtained by their alliance a much larger share of executive and arbitrary power; and as soon as they were connected by a sense of their common interest, they were enabled to attack, with united vigour, the original rights of their clergy and people. The prelates of the third century imperceptibly changed the language of exhortation into that of command, scattered the seeds of future usurpations, and

Progress of  
episcopal  
authority.

<sup>115</sup> *Acta Concil. Carthag. apud Cyprian. Edit. Fell, p. 158.* This council was composed of eighty-seven bishops from the provinces of Mauritania, Numidia, and Africa; some presbyters and deacons assisted at the assembly; *præsente plebis maximâ parte.*

<sup>116</sup> *Aguntur præterea per Græcias illas, certis in locis concilia, &c. Tertullian de Jeuniis, c. 13.* The African mentions it as a recent and foreign institution. The coalition of the Christian churches is very ably explained by Mosheim, p. 164—170.

supplied,

supplied, by scripture allegories and declamatory rhetoric, their deficiency of force and of reason. They exalted the unity and power of the church, as it was represented in the EPISCOPAL OFFICE, of which every bishop enjoyed an equal and undivided portion<sup>117</sup>. Princes and magistrates, it was often repeated, might boast an earthly claim to a transitory dominion: it was the episcopal authority alone which was derived from the Deity, and extended itself over this and over another world. The bishops were the vicegerents of Christ, the successors of the apostles, and the mystic substitutes of the high priest of the Mosaic law. Their exclusive privilege of conferring the sacerdotal character, invaded the freedom both of clerical and of popular elections; and if, in the administration of the church, they still consulted the judgment of the presbyters, or the inclination of the people, they most carefully inculcated the merit of such a voluntary condescension. The bishops acknowledged the supreme authority which resided in the assembly of their brethren; but in the government of his peculiar diocese, each of them exacted from his *flock* the same implicit obedience as if that favourite metaphor had been literally just, and as if the shepherd had been of a more exalted nature than that of his sheep<sup>118</sup>. This obedience, however,

<sup>117</sup> Cyprian, in his admired treatise *De Unitate Ecclesiæ*, p. 75—86.

<sup>118</sup> We may appeal to the whole tenor of Cyprian's conduct, of his doctrine, and of his Epistles. Le Clerc, in a short life of Cyprian (*Bibliothèque Universelle*, tom. xii. p. 207—378) has laid him open with great freedom and accuracy.

was not imposed without some efforts on one side, and some resistance on the other. The democratical part of the constitution was, in many places, very warmly supported by the zealous or interested opposition of the inferior clergy. But their patriotism received the ignominious epithets of faction and schism; and the episcopal cause was indebted for its rapid progress to the labours of many active prelates, who, like Cyprian of Carthage, could reconcile the arts of the most ambitious statesman with the Christian virtues which seem adapted to the character of a saint and martyr <sup>119</sup>.

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The same causes which at first had destroyed the equality of the presbyters, introduced among the bishops a pre-eminence of rank, and from thence a superiority of jurisdiction. As often as in the spring and autumn they met in provincial synod, the difference of personal merit and reputation was very sensibly felt among the members of the assembly, and the multitude was governed by the wisdom and eloquence of the few. But the order of public proceedings required a more regular and less invidious distinction; the office of perpetual presidents in the councils of each province, was conferred on the bishops of the principal city, and these aspiring prelates, who soon acquired the lofty titles of Metropo-

Pre-eminence of the metropolitan churches.

<sup>119</sup> If Novatus, Felicissimus, &c. whom the bishop of Carthage expelled from his church, and from Africa, were not the most detestable monsters of wickedness, the zeal of Cyprian must occasionally have prevailed over his veracity. For a very just account of these obscure quarrels, see Mosheim, p. 497—512.

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Ambition  
of the  
Roman  
pontiff.

litans and Primates, secretly prepared themselves to usurp over their episcopal brethren the same authority which the bishops had so lately assumed above the college of presbyters<sup>120</sup>. Nor was it long before an emulation of pre-eminence and power prevailed among the metropolitans themselves, each of them affecting to display, in the most pompous terms, the temporal honours and advantages of the city over which he presided; the numbers and opulence of the Christians, who were subject to their pastoral care; the saints and martyrs who had arisen among them, and the purity with which they preserved the tradition of the faith, as it had been transmitted through a series of orthodox bishops from the apostle or the apostolic disciple, to whom the foundation of their church was ascribed<sup>121</sup>. From every cause either of a civil or of an ecclesiastical nature, it was easy to foresee that Rome must enjoy the respect, and would soon claim the obedience, of the provinces. The society of the faithful bore a just proportion to the capital of the empire; and the Roman church was the greatest, the most numerous, and, in regard to the West, the most ancient of all the Christian establishments, many of which had received their religion from the pious labours of her missionaries. Instead of *one* apostolic founder, the utmost boast

<sup>120</sup> Mosheim, p. 269. 574. Dupin, *Antiquæ Eccles. Disciplin.* p. 19, 20.

<sup>121</sup> Tertullian, in a distinct treatise, has pleaded against the heretics, the right of prescription, as it was held by the apostolic churches.

of

of Antioch, of Ephesus, or of Corinth, the banks of the Tyber were supposed to have been honoured with the preaching and martyrdom of the *two* most eminent among the apostles<sup>122</sup>; and the bishops of Rome very prudently claimed the inheritance of whatsoever prerogatives were attributed either to the person or to the office of St. Peter<sup>123</sup>. The bishops of Italy and of the provinces were disposed to allow them a primacy of order and association (such was their very accurate expression) in the Christian aristocracy<sup>124</sup>. But the power of a monarch was rejected with abhorrence, and the aspiring genius of Rome experienced from the nations of Asia and Africa, a more vigorous resistance to her spiritual, than she had formerly done to her temporal, dominion. The patriotic Cyprian, who ruled with the most absolute sway the church of Carthage and the provincial synods, opposed

<sup>122</sup> The journey of St. Peter to Rome is mentioned by most of the ancients (see Eusebius, ii. 25.), maintained by all the catholics, allowed by some protestants (see Pearson and Dodwell de Success. Episcop. Roman.), but has been vigorously attacked by Spanheim (*Miscellanea Sacra*, iii. 3.). According to father Hardouin, the monks of the thirteenth century, who composed the *Æneid*, represented St. Peter under the allegorical character of the Trojan hero.

<sup>123</sup> It is in French only, that the famous allusion to St. Peter's name is exact. *Tu es Pierre et sur cette pierre.*—The same is imperfect in Greek, Latin, Italian, &c. and totally unintelligible in our Teutonic languages.

<sup>124</sup> Irenæus adv. Hæreses, iii. 3. Tertullian de Præscription. c. 36, and Cyprian Epistol. 27. 55. 71. 75. Le Clerc (*Hist. Eccles.* p. 764.) and Mosheim (p. 258. 278.) labour in the interpretation of these passages. But the loose and rhetorical style of the fathers often appears favourable to the pretensions of Rome.

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with resolution and success the ambition of the Roman pontiff, artfully connected his own cause with that of the eastern bishops, and, like Hannibal, sought out new allies in the heart of Asia<sup>125</sup>. If this Punic war was carried on without any effusion of blood, it was owing much less to the moderation than to the weakness of the contending prelates. Invectives and excommunications were *their* only weapons; and these, during the progress of the whole controversy, they hurled against each other with equal fury and devotion. The hard necessity of censuring either a pope, or a saint and martyr, distresses the modern catholics, whenever they are obliged to relate the particulars of a dispute, in which the champions of religion indulged such passions as seem much more adapted to the senate or to the camp<sup>126</sup>.

Laity and  
clergy.

The progress of the ecclesiastical authority gave birth to the memorable distinction of the laity and of the clergy, which had been unknown to the Greeks and Romans<sup>127</sup>. The former of these appellations comprehended the body of the Christian people; the latter, according to the signification of the word, was appropriated to the chosen portion that had been set apart for

<sup>125</sup> See the sharp epistle from Firmilianus, bishop of Cæsarea, to Stephen bishop of Rome, ap. Cyprian. Epistol. 75.

<sup>126</sup> Concerning this dispute of the re-baptism of heretics; see the epistles of Cyprian, and the seventh book of Eusebius.

<sup>127</sup> For the origin of these words, see Mosheim, p. 141. Spanheim, Hist. Ecclesiast. p. 633. The distinction of *Clerus* and *Laicus* was established before the time of Tertullian.

the

the service of religion; a celebrated order of men which has furnished the most important, though not always the most edifying, subjects for modern history. Their mutual hostilities sometimes disturbed the peace of the infant church, but their zeal and activity were united in the common cause, and the love of power, which (under the most artful disguises) could insinuate itself into the breasts of bishops and martyrs, animated them to increase the number of their subjects, and to enlarge the limits of the Christian empire. They were destitute of any temporal force, and they were for a long time discouraged and oppressed, rather than assisted, by the civil magistrate; but they had acquired, and they employed within their own society, the two most efficacious instruments of government, rewards and punishments; the former derived from the pious liberality, the latter from the devout apprehensions, of the faithful.

I. The community of goods, which had so agreeably amused the imagination of Plato<sup>128</sup>, and which subsisted in some degree among the austere sect of the Essenians<sup>129</sup>, was adopted for a short time in the primitive church. The fervour of the first profelytes prompted them to sell those worldly possessions, which they de-

Oblations  
and reve-  
nue of the  
church.

<sup>128</sup> The community instituted by Plato, is more perfect than that which Sir Thomas More had imagined for his Utopia. The community of women, and that of temporal goods, may be considered as inseparable parts of the same system.

<sup>129</sup> Joseph. Antiquitat. xviii. 2. Philo, de Vit. Contemplativ.

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spised, to lay the price of them at the feet of the apostles, and to content themselves with receiving an equal share out of the general distribution<sup>130</sup>. The progress of the Christian religion relaxed, and gradually abolished this generous institution, which, in hands less pure than those of the apostles, would too soon have been corrupted and abused by the returning selfishness of human nature; and the converts who embraced the new religion were permitted to retain the possession of their patrimony, to receive legacies and inheritances, and to increase their separate property by all the lawful means of trade and industry. Instead of an absolute sacrifice, a moderate proportion was accepted by the ministers of the gospel; and in their weekly or monthly assemblies, every believer, according to the exigency of the occasion, and the measure of his wealth and piety, presented his voluntary offering for the use of the common fund<sup>131</sup>. Nothing, however inconsiderable, was refused; but it was diligently inculcated, that, in the article of Tythes, the Mosaic law was still of divine obligation; and that since the Jews, under a less perfect discipline, had been commanded to pay a tenth part of all that they possessed, it would become the disciples of Christ to distinguish themselves by a superior degree of libe-

<sup>130</sup> See the Acts of the Apostles, c. 2. 4, 5. with Grotius's Commentary. Mosheim, in a particular dissertation, attacks the common opinion with very inconclusive arguments.

<sup>131</sup> Justin. Martyr, Apolog. Major, c. 89. Tertullian, Apolog. c. 39.

rality,

rality<sup>133</sup>, and to acquire some merit by resigning a superfluous treasure, which must so soon be annihilated with the world itself<sup>133</sup>. It is almost unnecessary to observe, that the revenue of each particular church, which was of so uncertain and fluctuating a nature, must have varied with the poverty or the opulence of the faithful, as they were dispersed in obscure villages, or collected in the great cities of the empire. In the time of the emperor Decius, it was the opinion of the magistrates, that the Christians of Rome were possessed of very considerable wealth; that vessels of gold and silver were used in their religious worship, and that many among their profelytes had sold their lands and houses to increase the public riches of the sect, at the expence, indeed, of their unfortunate children, who found themselves beggars, because their parents had been saints<sup>134</sup>. We should listen with

<sup>133</sup> Irenæus ad Hæres. l. iv. c. 27. 34. Origen in Num. Hom. ii. Cyprian de Unitat. Eccles. Constitut. Apostol. l. ii. c. 34, 35. with the notes of Cotelerius. The Constitutions introduce this divine precept, by declaring that priests are as much above kings, as the soul is above the body. Among the tythable articles, they enumerate corn, wine, oil, and wood. On this interesting subject, consult Prudeau's History of Tythes, and Fra-Paolo delle Materie Beneficarie; two writers of a very different character.

<sup>134</sup> The same opinion which prevailed about the year one thousand, was productive of the same effects. Most of the Donations express their motive, "appropinquante mundi fine." See Mosheim's General History of the Church, vol. i. p. 457.

<sup>134</sup> Tum summa cura est fratribus  
(Ut sermo testatur loquax.)  
Offerre, fundis venditis  
Sestertiorum millia.

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with distrust to the suspicions of strangers and enemies : on this occasion, however, they receive a very specious and probable colour from the two following circumstances, the only ones that have reached our knowledge, which define any precise sums, or convey any distinct idea. Almost at the same period, the bishop of Carthage, from a society less opulent than that of Rome, collected an hundred thousand sesterces (above eight hundred and fifty pounds sterling), on a sudden call of charity to redeem the brethren of Numidia, who had been carried away captives by the barbarians of the desert<sup>135</sup>. About an hundred years before the reign of Decius, the Roman church had received, in a single donation, the sum of two hundred thousand sesterces from a stranger of Pontus, who proposed to fix his residence in the capital<sup>136</sup>. These oblations, for the most part, were made in money ; nor

Addicta avorum prædia  
Fœdis sub auctionibus,  
Successor exheres gemit  
Sancti's egens Parentibus.  
Hæc occultantur abditis  
Ecclesiarum in Angulis,  
Et summa pietas creditur  
Nudare dulces liberos.

Prudent. *ſtupi reſponſum*. Hymn. 4.

The subsequent conduct of the deacon Laurence, only proves how proper a use was made of the wealth of the Roman church ; it was undoubtedly very considerable ; but Fra-Paolo (c. 3.) appears to exaggerate, when he supposes that the successors of Commodus were urged to persecute the Christians by their own avarice, or that of their Prætorian præfects.

<sup>135</sup> Cyprian. Epistol. 62.

<sup>136</sup> Tertullian de Prescriptions, c. 30.

was the society of Christians either desirous or capable of acquiring, to any considerable degree, the incumbrance of landed property. It had been provided by several laws, which were enacted with the same design as our statutes of mortmain, that no real estates should be given or bequeathed to any corporate body, without either a special privilege or a particular dispensation from the emperor or from the senate<sup>137</sup>; who were seldom disposed to grant them in favour of a sect, at first the object of their contempt, and at last of their fears and jealousy. A transaction however is related under the reign of Alexander Severus, which discovers that the restraint was sometimes eluded or suspended, and that the Christians were permitted to claim and to possess lands within the limits of Rome itself<sup>138</sup>. The progress of Christianity, and the civil confusion of the empire, contributed to relax the severity of the laws, and before the close of the third century many considerable estates were bestowed on the opulent churches of Rome, Milan, Carthage, Antioch, Alexandria, and the other great cities of Italy and the provinces.

The bishop was the natural steward of the church; the public stock was intrusted to his

Distribu-  
tion of the  
revenue.

<sup>137</sup> Diocletian gave a rescript, which is only a declaration of the old law: "Collegium, si nullo speciali privilegio subnixum sit, hereditatem capere non posse, dubium non est." Fra-Paolo (c. 4.) thinks that these regulations had been much neglected since the reign of Valerian.

<sup>138</sup> Hist. August. p. 137. The ground had been public; and was now disputed between the society of Christians, and that of butchers.

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care without account or controul; the presbyters were confined to their spiritual functions, and the more dependent order of deacons was solely employed in the management and distribution of the ecclesiastical revenue<sup>139</sup>. If we may give credit to the vehement declamations of Cyprian, there were too many among his African brethren, who, in the execution of their charge, violated every precept, not only of evangelic perfection, but even of moral virtue. By some of these unfaithful stewards the riches of the church were lavished in sensual pleasures, by others they were perverted to the purposes of private gain, of fraudulent purchases, and of rapacious usury<sup>140</sup>. But as long as the contributions of the Christian people were free and unconstrained, the abuse of their confidence could not be very frequent, and the general uses to which their liberality was applied, reflected honour on the religious society. A decent portion was reserved for the maintenance of the bishop and his clergy; a sufficient sum was allotted for the expences of the public worship, of which the feasts of love, the *agape*, as they were called, constituted a very pleasing part. The whole remainder was the sacred patrimony of the poor. According to the discretion of the bishop, it was distributed to support widows and orphans, the lame, the sick, and the aged of the community; to comfort strangers and pilgrims, and to alleviate the misfortunes of

<sup>139</sup> Constitut. Apostol. ii. 35.

<sup>140</sup> Cyprian de Lapsis, p. 89. Epistol. 65. The charge is confirmed by the 19th and 20th canon of the council of Illiberis.

prisoners

prisoners and captives, more especially when their sufferings had been occasioned by their firm attachment to the cause of religion <sup>141</sup>. A generous intercourse of charity united the most distant provinces, and the smaller congregations were cheerfully assisted by the alms of their more opulent brethren <sup>142</sup>. Such an institution, which paid less regard to the merit than to the distress of the object, very materially conduced to the progress of Christianity. The Pagans, who were actuated by a sense of humanity, while they derided the doctrines, acknowledged the benevolence, of the new sect <sup>143</sup>. The prospect of immediate relief and of future protection allured into its hospitable bosom many of those unhappy persons whom the neglect of the world would have abandoned to the miseries of want, of sickness, and of old age. There is some reason likewise to believe, that great numbers of infants, who, according to the inhuman practice of the times, had been exposed by their parents, were frequently rescued from death, baptised, educated, and maintained by the piety of the Christians, and at the expence of the public treasure <sup>144</sup>.

## II. It

<sup>141</sup> See the apologies of Justin, Tertullian, &c.

<sup>142</sup> The wealth and liberality of the Romans to their most distant brethren is gratefully celebrated by Dionysius of Corinth, ap. Euseb. l. iv. c. 23.

<sup>143</sup> See Lucian in Peregrin. Julian (Epist. 49.) seems mortified, that the Christian charity maintains not only their own, but likewise the heathen poor.

<sup>144</sup> Such, at least, has been the laudable conduct of more modern missionaries, under the same circumstances. Above three thousand

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muni-  
cation.

II. It is the undoubted right of every society to exclude from its communion and benefits such among its members as reject or violate those regulations which have been established by general consent. In the exercise of this power, the censures of the Christian church were chiefly directed against scandalous sinners, and particularly those who were guilty of murder, of fraud, or of incontinence; against the authors, or the followers of any heretical opinions which had been condemned by the judgment of the episcopal order; and against those unhappy persons, who, whether from choice or from compulsion, had polluted themselves after their baptism by any act of idolatrous worship. The consequences of excommunication were of a temporal as well as a spiritual nature. The Christian against whom it was pronounced, was deprived of any part in the oblations of the faithful. The ties both of religious and of private friendship were dissolved: he found himself a profane object of abhorrence to the persons whom he the most esteemed, or by whom he had been the most tenderly beloved; and as far as an expulsion from a respectable society could imprint on his character a mark of disgrace, he was shunned or suspected by the generality of mankind. The situation of these unfortunate exiles was in itself very painful and melancholy; but, as it usually happens, their apprehensions far exceeded their

new born infants are annually exposed in the streets of Pekin. See Le Comte Memoires sur la Chine, and the Recherches sur les Chinois et les Egyptiens, tom. i. p. 61.

suffer-

sufferings. The benefits of the Christian communion were those of eternal life, nor could they erase from their minds the awful opinion, that to those ecclesiastical governors by whom they were condemned, the Deity had committed the keys of Hell and of Paradise. The heretics, indeed, who might be supported by the consciousness of their intentions, and by the flattering hope that they alone had discovered the true path of salvation, endeavoured to regain, in their separate assemblies, those comforts, temporal as well as spiritual, which they no longer derived from the great society of Christians. But almost all those who had reluctantly yielded to the power of vice or idolatry, were sensible of their fallen condition, and anxiously desirous of being restored to the benefits of the Christian communion.

With regard to the treatment of these penitents, two opposite opinions, the one of justice, the other of mercy, divided the primitive church. The more rigid and inflexible casuists refused them for ever, and without exception, the meanest place in the holy community, which they had disgraced or deserted, and leaving them to the remorse of a guilty conscience, indulged them only with a faint ray of hope, that the contrition of their life and death might possibly be accepted by the Supreme Being <sup>145</sup>. A milder

<sup>145</sup> The Montanists and the Novatians, who adhered to this opinion with the greatest rigour and obstinacy, found *themselves* at last in the number of excommunicated heretics. See the learned and copious Mosheim, *Secul. ii. and iii.*

sentiment

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Public  
penance.

sentiment was embraced in practice as well as in theory, by the purest and most respectable of the Christian churches<sup>146</sup>. The gates of reconciliation and of Heaven were seldom shut against the returning penitent; but a severe and solemn form of discipline was instituted, which, while it served to expiate his crime, might powerfully deter the spectators from the imitation of his example. Humbled by a public confession, emaciated by fasting, and clothed in sackcloth, the penitent lay prostrate at the door of the assembly, imploring with tears the pardon of his offences, and soliciting the prayers of the faithful<sup>147</sup>. If the fault was of a very heinous nature, whole years of penance were esteemed an inadequate satisfaction to the Divine Justice; and it was always by slow and painful gradations that the sinner, the heretic, or the apostate, was re-admitted into the bosom of the church. A sentence of perpetual excommunication was, however, reserved for some crimes of an extraordinary magnitude, and particularly for the inexcusable relapses of those penitents who had already experienced and abused the clemency of their ecclesiastical superiors. According to the circumstances or the number of the guilty, the exercise of the Christian discipline was varied by the discretion of the bishops. The councils of Ancyra and Illiberis were held about the same

<sup>146</sup> Dionysius ap. Euseb. iv. 23. Cyprian, de Lapsis.

<sup>147</sup> Cave's Primitive Christianity, part iii. c. 5. The admirers of antiquity regret the loss of this public penance,

time,

time, the one in Galatia, the other in Spain; but their respective canons, which are still extant, seem to breathe a very different spirit. The Galatian, who after his baptism had repeatedly sacrificed to idols, might obtain his pardon by a penance of seven years, and if he had seduced others to imitate his example, only three years more were added to the term of his exile. But the unhappy Spaniard, who had committed the same offence, was deprived of the hope of reconciliation, even in the article of death; and his idolatry was placed at the head of a list of seventeen other crimes, against which a sentence no less terrible was pronounced. Among these we may distinguish the inexpressible guilt of calumniating a bishop, a presbyter, or even a deacon<sup>148</sup>.

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The well-tempered mixture of liberality and rigour, the judicious dispensation of rewards and punishments, according to the maxims of policy as well as justice, constituted the *human* strength of the church. The bishops, whose paternal care extended itself to the government of both worlds, were sensible of the importance of these prerogatives, and covering their ambition with the fair pretence of the love of order, they were jealous of any rival in the exercise of a discipline

The dignity of episcopal government.

<sup>148</sup> See in Dupin, *Bibliothèque Ecclesiastique*, tom. ii. p. 304—313, a short but rational exposition of the canons of those councils, which were assembled in the first moments of tranquillity, after the persecution of Diocletian. This persecution had been much less severely felt in Spain than in Galatia; a difference which may, in some measure, account for the contrast of their regulations.

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so necessary to prevent the desertion of those troops which had enlisted themselves under the banner of the cross, and whose numbers every day became more considerable. From the imperious declamations of Cyprian, we should naturally conclude, that the doctrines of excommunication and penance formed the most essential part of religion; and that it was much less dangerous for the disciples of Christ to neglect the observance of the moral duties, than to despise the censures and authority of their bishops. Sometimes we might imagine that we were listening to the voice of Moses, when he commanded the earth to open, and to swallow up, in consuming flames, the rebellious race which refused obedience to the priesthood of Aaron; and we should sometimes suppose that we heard a Roman consul asserting the majesty of the republic, and declaring his inflexible resolution to enforce the rigour of the laws. "If such irregularities are suffered with impunity (it is thus that the bishop of Carthage chides the lenity of his colleague), if such irregularities are suffered, there is an end of EPISCOPAL VIGOUR"; an end of the sublime and divine power of governing the church, an end of Christianity itself." Cyprian had renounced those temporal honours, which it is probable he would never have obtained; but the acquisition of such absolute command over the consciences and understanding of a congregation, however obscure or

<sup>149</sup> Cyprian. Epist. 69.

despised

despised by the world, is more truly grateful to the pride of the human heart, than the possession of the most despotic power, imposed by arms and conquest on a reluctant people.

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In the course of this important, though perhaps tedious, inquiry, I have attempted to display the secondary causes which so efficaciously assisted the truth of the Christian religion. If among these causes we have discovered any artificial ornaments, any accidental circumstances, or any mixture of error and passion, it cannot appear surprising that mankind should be the most sensibly affected by such motives as were suited to their imperfect nature. It was by the aid of these causes, exclusive zeal, the immediate expectation of another world, the claim of miracles, the practice of rigid virtue, and the constitution of the primitive church, that Christianity spread itself with so much success in the Roman empire. To the first of these the Christians were indebted for their invincible valour, which disdained to capitulate with the enemy whom they were resolved to vanquish. The three succeeding causes supplied their valour with the most formidable arms. The last of these causes united their courage, directed their arms, and gave their efforts that irresistible weight, which even a small band of well-trained and intrepid volunteers has so often possessed over an undisciplined multitude, ignorant of the subject, and careless of the event of the war. In the various religions of Polytheism, some

Recapitulation of the five causes.

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A a

wander-

Weakness of Polytheism.

wandering fanatics of Egypt and Syria, who addressed themselves to the credulous superstition of the populace, were perhaps the only order of priests<sup>150</sup> that derived their whole support and credit from their sacerdotal profession, and were very deeply affected by a personal concern for the safety or prosperity of their tutelar deities. The ministers of Polytheism, both in Rome and in the provinces, were, for the most part, men of a noble birth, and of an affluent fortune, who received, as an honourable distinction, the care of a celebrated temple, or of a public sacrifice, exhibited, very frequently at their own expence, the sacred games<sup>151</sup>, and with cold indifference, performed the ancient rites, according to the laws and fashion of their country. As they were engaged in the ordinary occupations of life, their zeal and devotion were seldom animated by a sense of interest, or by the habits of an ecclesiastical character. Confined to their respective temples and cities, they remained without any connexion of discipline or government; and whilst they acknowledged the supreme jurisdiction of the senate, of the college of pontiffs, and

<sup>150</sup> The arts, the manners, and the vices of the priests of the Syrian goddess, are very humourously described by Apuleius, in the eighth book of his *Metamorphosis*.

<sup>151</sup> The office of Asiarch was of this nature, and it is frequently mentioned in *Aristides*, the *Inscriptions*, &c. It was annual and elective. None but the vainest citizens could desire the honour; none but the most wealthy could support the expence. See in the *Patres Apostol.* tom. ii. p. 200. with how much indifference Philip the Asiarch conducted himself in the martyrdom of Polycarp. There were likewise Bithyniarchs, Lyciarchs, &c.

of

of the emperor, those civil magistrates contented themselves with the easy task of maintaining, in peace and dignity, the general worship of mankind. We have already seen how various, how loose, and how uncertain were the religious sentiments of Polytheists. They were abandoned, almost without controul, to the natural workings of a superstitious fancy. The accidental circumstances of their life and situation determined the object as well as the degree of their devotion; and as long as their adoration was successively prostituted to a thousand deities, it was scarcely possible that their hearts could be susceptible of a very sincere or lively passion for any of them.

When Christianity appeared in the world, even these faint and imperfect impressions had lost much of their original power. Human reason, which by its unassisted strength is incapable of perceiving the mysteries of faith, had already obtained an easy triumph over the folly of Paganism; and when Tertullian or Lactantius employ their labours in exposing its falsehood and extravagance, they are obliged to transcribe the eloquence of Cicero or the wit of Lucian. The contagion of these sceptical writings had been diffused far beyond the number of their readers. The fashion of incredulity was communicated from the philosopher to the man of pleasure or business, from the noble to the plebeian, and from the master to the menial slave who waited at his table, and who eagerly listened to the freedom of his conversation. On public occasions

The scepticism of the Pagan world proved favourable to the new religion,

sions the philosophic part of mankind affected to treat with respect and decency the religious institutions of their country; but their secret contempt penetrated through the thin and awkward disguise, and even the people, when they discovered that their deities were rejected and derided by those whose rank or understanding they were accustomed to reverence, were filled with doubts and apprehensions concerning the truth of those doctrines, to which they had yielded the most implicit belief. The decline of ancient prejudice exposed a very numerous portion of human kind to the danger of a painful and comfortless situation. A state of scepticism and suspense may amuse a few inquisitive minds. But the practice of superstition is so congenial to the multitude, that if they are forcibly awakened, they still regret the loss of their pleasing vision. Their love of the marvellous and supernatural, their curiosity with regard to future events, and their strong propensity to extend their hopes and fears beyond the limits of the visible world, were the principal causes which favoured the establishment of Polytheism. So urgent on the vulgar is the necessity of believing that the fall of any system of mythology will most probably be succeeded by the introduction of some other mode of superstition. Some deities of a more recent and fashionable cast might soon have occupied the deserted temples of Jupiter and Apollo, if, in the decisive moment, the wisdom of Providence had not interposed a genuine revelation, fitted to inspire the most rational esteem and conviction,

whilst, at the same time, it was adorned with all that could attract the curiosity, the wonder, and the veneration of the people. In their actual disposition, as many were almost disengaged from their artificial prejudices, but equally susceptible and desirous of a devout attachment; an object much less deserving would have been sufficient to fill the vacant place in their hearts, and to gratify the uncertain eagerness of their passions. Those who are inclined to pursue this reflection, instead of viewing with astonishment the rapid progress of Christianity, will perhaps be surprised that its success was not still more rapid and still more universal.

It has been observed, with truth as well as propriety, that the conquests of Rome prepared and facilitated those of Christianity. In the second chapter of this work we have attempted to explain in what manner the most civilized provinces of Europe, Asia, and Africa, were united under the dominion of one sovereign, and gradually connected by the most intimate ties of laws, of manners, and of language. The Jews of Palestine, who had fondly expected a temporal deliverer, gave so cold a reception to the miracles of the divine prophet, that it was found unnecessary to publish, or at least to preserve, any Hebrew gospel<sup>152</sup>. The authentic histories of the actions of Christ were composed in the

as well as  
the peace  
and union  
of the Ro-  
man em-  
pire.

<sup>152</sup> The modern critics are not disposed to believe what the fathers almost unanimously assert, that St. Matthew composed a Hebrew gospel, of which only the Greek translation is extant. It seems, however, dangerous to reject their testimony.

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Historical  
view of  
the pro-  
gress of  
Christian-  
ity

Greek language, at a considerable distance from Jerusalem, and after the Gentile converts were grown extremely numerous<sup>153</sup>. As soon as those histories were translated into the Latin tongue, they were perfectly intelligible to all the subjects of Rome, excepting only to the peasants of Syria and Egypt, for whose benefit particular versions were afterwards made. The public highways, which had been constructed for the use of the legions, opened an easy passage for the Christian missionaries from Damascus to Corinth, and from Italy to the extremity of Spain or Britain; nor did those spiritual conquerors encounter any of the obstacles which usually retard or prevent the introduction of a foreign religion into a distant country. There is the strongest reason to believe, that before the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine, the faith of Christ had been preached in every province, and in all the great cities of the empire; but the foundation of the several congregations, the numbers of the faithful who composed them, and their proportion to the unbelieving multitude, are now buried in obscurity, or disguised by fiction and declamation. Such imperfect circumstances, however, as have reached our knowledge concerning the increase of the Christian name in Asia and Greece, in Egypt, in Italy, and in the West, we shall now proceed to relate, without neglecting the real or imaginary

<sup>153</sup> Under the reigns of Nero and Domitian, and in the cities of Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, and Ephesus. See Mill. Prolegomena ad Nov. Testament. and Dr. Lardner's fair and extensive collection, vol. xv.

acqui-

acquisitions which lay beyond the frontiers of the Roman empire.

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in the East.

The rich provinces that extend from the Euphrates to the Ionian sea, were the principal theatre on which the apostle of the Gentiles displayed his zeal and piety. The seeds of the gospel, which he had scattered in a fertile soil, were diligently cultivated by his disciples; and it should seem that, during the two first centuries, the most considerable body of Christians was contained within those limits. Among the societies which were instituted in Syria, none were more ancient or more illustrious than those of Damascus, of Berea or Aleppo, and of Antioch. The prophetic introduction of the Apocalypse has described and immortalised the seven churches of Asia; Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira<sup>154</sup>, Sardes, Laodicea, and Philadelphia; and their colonies were soon diffused over that populous country. In a very early period, the islands of Cyprus and Crete, the provinces of Thrace and Macedonia, gave a favourable reception to the new religion; and Christian republics were soon founded in the cities of Corinth, of Sparta, and of Athens<sup>155</sup>. The antiquity of the Greek and Asiatic churches allowed a sufficient space of

<sup>154</sup> The Alogians (Epiphanius de Hæres. 51.) disputed the genuineness of the Apocalypse, because the church of Thyatira was not yet founded. Epiphanius, who allows the fact, extricates himself from the difficulty, by ingeniously supposing, that St. John wrote in the spirit of prophecy. See Abauzit Discours sur l'Apocalypse.

<sup>155</sup> The epistles of Ignatius and Dionysius (ap. Euseb. iv. 23.) point out many churches in Asia and Greece. That of Athens seems to have been one of the least flourishing.

time for their increase and multiplication, and even the swarms of Gnostics and other heretics serve to display the flourishing condition of the orthodox church, since the appellation of heretics has always been applied to the less numerous party. To these domestic testimonies we may add the confession, the complaints, and the apprehensions of the Gentiles themselves. From the writings of Lucian, a philosopher who had studied mankind, and who describes their manners in the most lively colours, we may learn, that, under the reign of Commodus, his native country of Pontus was filled with Epicureans and *Christians*<sup>156</sup>. Within fourscore years after the death of Christ<sup>157</sup>, the humane Pliny laments the magnitude of the evil which he vainly attempted to eradicate. In his very curious epistle to the emperor Trajan, he affirms, that the temples were almost deserted, that the sacred victims scarcely found any purchasers, and that the superstition had not only infected the cities, but had even spread itself into the villages and the open country of Pontus and Bithynia<sup>158</sup>.

The  
church of  
Antioch.

Without descending into a minute scrutiny of the expressions, or of the motives of those wri-

<sup>156</sup> Lucian in Alexandro, c. 25. Christianity, however, must have been very unequally diffused over Pontus; since in the middle of the third century there were no more than seventeen believers in the extensive diocese of Neo-Cæsarea. See M. de Tillemont, *Memoires Ecclesiast.* tom. iv. p. 675. from Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, who were themselves natives of Cappadocia.

<sup>157</sup> According to the ancients, Jesus Christ suffered under the consulship of the two Gemini, in the year 29 of our present æra, Pliny was sent into Bithynia (according to Pagi) in the year 110.

<sup>158</sup> Plin. *Epist.* x. 97.

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ters who either celebrate or lament the progress of Christianity in the East, it may in general be observed, that none of them have left us any grounds from whence a just estimate might be formed of the real numbers of the faithful in those provinces. One circumstance, however, has been fortunately preserved, which seems to cast a more distinct light on this obscure but interesting subject. Under the reign of Theodosius, after Christianity had enjoyed, during more than sixty years, the sunshine of Imperial favour, the ancient and illustrious church of Antioch consisted of one hundred thousand persons, three thousand of whom were supported out of the public oblations<sup>159</sup>. The splendour and dignity of the queen of the East, the acknowledged populousness of Cæsarea, Seleucia, and Alexandria, and the destruction of two hundred and fifty thousand souls in the earthquake which afflicted Antioch under the elder Justin<sup>160</sup>, are so many convincing proofs that the whole number of its inhabitants was not less than half a million, and that the Christians, however multiplied by zeal and power, did not exceed a fifth part of that great city. How different a proportion must we adopt when we compare the persecuted with the triumphant church, the West with the East, remote villages with populous towns, and countries recently converted to the faith, with

<sup>159</sup> Chrysostom. Opera, tom. vii. p. 658. 810.

<sup>160</sup> John Malela, tom. ii. p. 144. He draws the same conclusion with regard to the populousness of Antioch.

the

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the place where the believers first received the appellation of Christians! It must not, however, be dissimbled, that, in another passage, Chrysostom, to whom we are indebted for this useful information, computes the multitude of the faithful as even superior to that of the Jews and Pagans<sup>161</sup>. But the solution of this apparent difficulty is easy and obvious. The eloquent preacher draws a parallel between the civil and the ecclesiastical constitution of Antioch; between the list of Christians who had acquired Heaven by baptism, and the list of citizens who had a right to share the public liberality. Slaves, strangers, and infants were comprised in the former; they were excluded from the latter.

In Egypt. The extensive commerce of Alexandria, and its proximity to Palestine, gave an easy entrance to the new religion. It was at first embraced by great numbers of the Therapeutæ, or Essenians of the lake Mareotis, a Jewish sect which had abated much of its reverence for the Mosaic ceremonies. The austere life of the Essenians, their fasts and excommunications, the community of goods, the love of celibacy, their zeal for martyrdom, and the warmth though not the purity of their faith, already offered a very lively image of the primitive discipline<sup>162</sup>. It was in the

<sup>161</sup> Chrysostom. tom. i. p. 592. I am indebted for these passages, though not for my inference, to the learned Dr. Lardner. *Credibility of the Gospel History*, vol. xii. p. 370.

<sup>162</sup> Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. 2. c. 20, 21, 22, 23. has examined, with the most critical accuracy, the curious treatise of Philo, which

the school of Alexandria that the Christian theology appears to have assumed a regular and scientific form; and when Hadrian visited Egypt, he found a church composed of Jews and of Greeks, sufficiently important to attract the notice of that inquisitive prince<sup>163</sup>. But the progress of Christianity was for a long time confined within the limits of a single city, which was itself a foreign colony, and till the close of the second century the predecessors of Demetrius were the only prelates of the Egyptian church. Three bishops were consecrated by the hands of Demetrius, and the number was increased to twenty by his successor Heraclas<sup>164</sup>. The body of the natives, a people distinguished by a sullen inflexibility of temper<sup>165</sup>, entertained the new doctrine with coldness and reluctance: and even in the time of Origen, it was rare to meet with an Egyptian who had surmounted his early prejudices in favour of the sacred animals of his country<sup>166</sup>. As soon, indeed, as Christianity ascended

which describes the Therapeutæ. By proving that it was composed as early as the time of Augustus, Basnage has demonstrated, in spite of Eusebius (l. ii. c. 17.), and a crowd of modern Catholics, that the Therapeutæ were neither Christians nor monks. It still remains probable that they changed their name, preserved their manners, adopted some new articles of faith, and gradually became the fathers of the Egyptian Ascetics.

<sup>163</sup> See a letter of Hadrian, in the Augustan History, p. 245.

<sup>164</sup> For the succession of Alexandrian bishops, consult Renaudot's History, p. 24, &c. This curious fact is preserved by the patriarch Eutychius (Annal. tom. i. p. 334. Versf. Pocock), and its internal evidence would alone be a sufficient answer to all the objections which Bishop Pearson has urged in the Vindiciæ Ignatianæ.

<sup>165</sup> Ammian. Marcellin. xxii. 16.

<sup>166</sup> Origen contra Celsum, l. i. p. 40.

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the throne, the zeal of those barbarians obeyed the prevailing impulsion; the cities of Egypt were filled with bishops, and the deserts of Thebais swarmed with hermits.

In Rome.

A perpetual stream of strangers and provincials flowed into the capacious bosom of Rome. Whatever was strange or odious, whoever was guilty or suspected, might hope, in the obscurity of that immense capital, to elude the vigilance of the law. In such a various conflux of nations, every teacher, either of truth or of falsehood, every founder, whether of a virtuous or a criminal association, might easily multiply his disciples or accomplices. The Christians of Rome, at the time of the accidental persecution of Nero, are represented by Tacitus as already amounting to a very great multitude<sup>167</sup>, and the language of that great historian is almost similar to the style employed by Livy, when he relates the introduction and the suppression of the rites of Bacchus. After the Bacchanals had awakened the severity of the senate, it was likewise apprehended that a very great multitude, as it were *another people*, had been initiated into those abhorred mysteries. A more careful inquiry soon demonstrated, that the offenders did not exceed seven thousand; a number indeed sufficiently alarming, when considered as the object of public justice<sup>168</sup>. It is with the same candid allow-

<sup>167</sup> *Ingenus multitudo* is the expression of Tacitus, xv. 44.

<sup>168</sup> T. Liv. xxxix. 13, 15, 16, 17. Nothing could exceed the horror and consternation of the senate on the discovery of the Bacchanals, whose depravity is described, and perhaps exaggerated, by Livy.

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ance that we should interpret the vague expressions of Tacitus, and in a former instance of Pliny, when they exaggerate the crowds of deluded fanatics who had forsaken the established worship of the gods. The church of Rome was undoubtedly the first and most populous of the empire; and we are possessed of an authentic record which attests the state of religion in that city about the middle of the third century, and after a peace of thirty-eight years. The clergy, at that time, consisted of a bishop, forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, as many sub-deacons, forty-two acolythes, and fifty readers, exorcists, and porters. The number of widows, of the infirm, and of the poor, who were maintained by the oblations of the faithful, amounted to fifteen hundred <sup>169</sup>. From reason, as well as from the analogy of Antioch, we may venture to estimate the Christians of Rome at about fifty thousand. The populousness of that great capital cannot perhaps be exactly ascertained; but the most modest calculation will not surely reduce it lower than a million of inhabitants, of whom the Christians might constitute at the most a twentieth part <sup>170</sup>.

<sup>169</sup> Eusebius, l. vi. c. 43. The Latin translator (M. de Valois) has thought proper to reduce the number of presbyters to forty-four.

<sup>170</sup> This proportion of the presbyters and of the poor, to the rest of the people, was originally fixed by Burnet (*Travels into Italy*, p. 168.), and is approved by Moyle (vol. ii. p. 151.). They were both unacquainted with the passage of Chrysostom, which converts their conjecture almost into a fact.

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of the faith, when he addressed his apology to the magistrates of the emperor Severus<sup>174</sup>. But the obscure and imperfect origin of the western churches of Europe has been so negligently recorded, that if we would relate the time and manner of their foundation, we must supply the silence of antiquity by those legends which avarice or superstition long afterwards dictated to the monks in the lazy gloom of their convents<sup>175</sup>. Of these holy romances, that of the apostle St. James can alone, by its single extravagance, deserve to be mentioned. From a peaceful fisherman of the lake of Gennefareth, he was transformed into a valorous knight, who charged at the head of the Spanish chivalry in their battles against the Moors. The gravest historians have celebrated his exploits; the miraculous shrine of Compostella displayed his power; and the sword of a military order, assisted by the terrors of the Inquisition, was sufficient to remove every objection of profane criticism<sup>176</sup>.

Beyond the  
limits of  
the Roman  
empire.

The progress of Christianity was not confined to the Roman empire; and according to the primitive fathers, who interpret facts by prophecy,

<sup>174</sup> The date of Tertullian's Apology is fixed, in a dissertation of Mosheim, to the year 198.

<sup>175</sup> In the fifteenth century, there were few who had either inclination or courage to question, whether Joseph of Arimathea founded the monastery of Glousterbury, and whether Dionysius the Areopagite preferred the residence of Paris to that of Athens.

<sup>176</sup> The stupendous metamorphosis was performed in the ninth century. See Mariana (*Hist. Hispan.* l. vii. c. 13. tom. i. p. 285. edit. Hag. Com. 1733.), who, in every sense, imitates Livy, and the honest detection of the legend of St. James by Dr. Goldes, *Miscellanies*, vol. ii. p. 221.

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the new religion, within a century after the death of its divine author, had already visited every part of the globe. "There exists not," says Justin Martyr, "a people, whether Greek or Barbarian, or any other race of men, by whatsoever appellation or manners they may be distinguished, however ignorant of arts or agriculture, whether they dwell under tents, or wander about in covered waggons, among whom prayers are not offered up in the name of a crucified Jesus to the Father and Creator of all things<sup>177</sup>." But this splendid exaggeration, which even at present it would be extremely difficult to reconcile with the real state of mankind, can be considered only as the rash folly of a devout but careless writer, the measure of whose belief was regulated by that of his wishes. But neither the belief, nor the wishes, of the fathers, can alter the truth of history. It will still remain an undoubted fact, that the barbarians of Scythia and Germany, who afterwards subverted the Roman monarchy, were involved in the darkness of paganism; and that even the conversion of Iberia, of Armenia, or of Æthiopia, was not attempted with any degree of success till the sceptre was in the hands of an orthodox emperor<sup>178</sup>. Before that time, the various accidents

<sup>177</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialog. cum Tryphon.* p. 341. Irenæus *adv. Hæres.* l. i. c. 10. Tertullian *adv. Jud.* c. 7. See Mosheim, p. 203.

<sup>178</sup> See the fourth century of Mosheim's *History of the Church*. Many, though very confused circumstances, that relate to the conversion of Iberia and Armenia, may be found in Mosès of Chorene, l. ii. c. 78—89.

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of war and commerce might indeed diffuse an imperfect knowledge of the gospel among the tribes of Caledonia <sup>179</sup>, and among the borderers of the Rhine, the Danube, and the Euphrates <sup>180</sup>. Beyond the last-mentioned river, Edessa was distinguished by a firm and early adherence to the faith <sup>181</sup>. From Edessa, the principles of Christianity were easily introduced into the Greek and Syrian cities which obeyed the successors of Artaxerxes; but they do not appear to have made any deep impression on the minds of the Persians, whose religious system, by the labours of a well-disciplined order of priests, had been constructed with much more art and solidity than the uncertain mythology of Greece and Rome <sup>182</sup>.

<sup>179</sup> According to Tertullian, the Christian faith had penetrated into parts of Britain inaccessible to the Roman arms. About a century afterwards, Ossian, the son of Fingal, is *said* to have disputed, in his extreme old age, with one of the foreign missionaries, and the dispute is still extant, in verse, and in the Euse language. See Mr. Macpherson's Dissertation on the Antiquity of Ossian's Poems, p. 10.

<sup>180</sup> The Goths, who ravaged Asia in the reign of Gallienus, carried away great numbers of captives; some of whom were Christians, and became missionaries. See Tillemont, *Memoires Ecclesiast.* tom. iv. p. 44.

<sup>181</sup> The legend of Abgarus, fabulous as it is, affords a decisive proof, that many years before Eusebius wrote his history, the greatest part of the inhabitants of Edessa had embraced Christianity. Their rivals, the citizens of Carthæ, adhered, on the contrary, to the cause of Paganism, as late as the sixth century.

<sup>182</sup> According to Bardesanes (ap. Euseb. *Præpar. Evangel.*) there were some Christians in Persia before the end of the second century. In the time of Constantine (see his Epistle to Sapor, Vit. I. iv. c. 13.) they composed a flourishing church. Consult Beausobre, *Hist. Critique du Manichéisme*, tom. i. p. 180. and the *Bibliotheca Orientalis* of Assemani.

From

From this impartial though imperfect survey of the progress of Christianity, it may perhaps seem probable, that the number of its profelytes has been excessively magnified by fear on the one side, and by devotion on the other. According to the irreproachable testimony of Origen<sup>183</sup>, the proportion of the faithful was very inconsiderable, when compared with the multitude of an unbelieving world; but, as we are left without any distinct information, it is impossible to determine, and it is difficult even to conjecture, the real numbers of the primitive Christians. The most favourable calculation, however, that can be deduced from the examples of Antioch and of Rome, will not permit us to imagine that more than a twentieth part of the subjects of the empire had enlisted themselves under the banner of the cross before the important conversion of Constantine. But their habits of faith, of zeal, and of union, seemed to multiply their numbers; and the same causes which contributed to their future increase, served to render their actual strength more apparent and more formidable.

Such is the constitution of civil society, that whilst a few persons are distinguished by riches, by honours, and by knowledge, the body of the people is condemned to obscurity, ignorance, and poverty. The Christian religion, which addressed itself to the whole human race, must consequently collect a far greater number of profelytes from the lower than from the superior ranks of life.

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General  
proportion  
of Christi-  
ans and  
Pagans.

Whether  
the first  
Christians  
were mean  
and igno-  
rant.

<sup>183</sup> Origen contra Celsum, l. viii. p. 444.

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This innocent and natural circumstance has been improved into a very odious imputation, which seems to be less strenuously denied by the apologists, than it is urged by the adversaries, of the faith; that the new sect of Christians was almost entirely composed of the dregs of the populace, of peasants and mechanics, of boys and women, of beggars and slaves, the last of whom might sometimes introduce the missionaries into the rich and noble families to which they belonged. These obscure teachers (such was the charge of malice and infidelity) are as mute in public as they are loquacious and dogmatical in private. Whilst they cautiously avoid the dangerous encounter of philosophers, they mingle with the rude and illiterate crowd, and insinuate themselves into those minds, whom their age, their sex, or their education, has the best disposed to receive the impression of superstitious terrors<sup>184</sup>.

Some exceptions with regard to learning;

This unfavourable picture, though not devoid of a faint resemblance, betrays, by its dark colouring and distorted features, the pencil of an enemy. As the humble faith of Christ diffused itself through the world, it was embraced by several persons who derived some consequence from the advantages of nature or fortune. Aristides, who presented an eloquent apology to the emperor Hadrian, was an Athenian philosopher<sup>185</sup>. Justin Martyr had sought divine knowledge in the schools of Zeno, of Aristotle, of Pythagoras,

<sup>184</sup> Minucius Felix, c. 8. with Wowerus's notes. Celsus ap. Origen, l. iii. p. 138. 142. Julian ap. Cyril. l. vi. p. 206. Edit. Spanheim.

<sup>185</sup> Euseb. Hist. Eccles. iv. 3. Hieronym. Epist. 81.

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and of Plato, before he fortunately was accosted by the old man, or rather the angel, who turned his attention to the study of the Jewish prophets<sup>186</sup>. Clemens of Alexandria had acquired much various reading in the Greek, and Tertullian in the Latin, language. Julius Africanus and Origen possessed a very considerable share of the learning of their times; and although the style of Cyprian is very different from that of Lactantius, we might almost discover that both those writers had been public teachers of rhetoric. Even the study of philosophy was at length introduced among the Christians, but it was not always productive of the most salutary effects; knowledge was as often the parent of heresy as of devotion, and the description which was designed for the followers of Artemon, may, with equal propriety, be applied to the various sects that resisted the successors of the apostles. “ They presume to alter the holy scriptures, to “ abandon the ancient rule of faith, and to “ form their opinions according to the subtle “ precepts of logic. The science of the church “ is neglected for the study of geometry, and “ they lose sight of Heaven while they are employed in measuring the earth. Euclid is perpetually in their hands. Aristotle and Theophrastus are the objects of their admiration; “ and they express an uncommon reverence for “ the works of Galen. Their errors are derived

<sup>186</sup> The story is prettily told in Justin's Dialogues. Tillemont (*Mém. Ecclesiast.* tom. ii. p. 334.), who relates it after him, is sure that the old man was a disguised angel.

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“ from the abuse of the arts and sciences of  
“ the infidels, and they corrupt the simplicity  
“ of the gospel by the refinements of human  
“ reason <sup>187</sup>.”

with re-  
gard to  
rank and  
fortune.

Nor can it be affirmed with truth, that the advantages of birth and fortune were always separated from the profession of Christianity. Several Roman citizens were brought before the tribunal of Pliny, and he soon discovered, that a great number of persons of *every order* of men in Bithynia had deserted the religion of their ancestors <sup>188</sup>. His unsuspected testimony may, in this instance, obtain more credit than the bold challenge of Tertullian, when he addresses himself to the fears as well as to the humanity of the proconsul of Africa, by assuring him, that if he persists in his cruel intentions, he must decimate Carthage, and that he will find among the guilty many persons of his own rank, senators and matrons of noblest extraction, and the friends or relations of his most intimate friends <sup>189</sup>. It appears, however, that about forty years afterwards the emperor Valerian was persuaded of the truth of this assertion, since in one of his rescripts he evidently supposes, that senators, Roman knights, and ladies of quality, were engaged in

<sup>187</sup> Eusebius, v. 28. It may be hoped, that none, except the heretics, gave occasion to the complaint of Celsus (ap. Origen, l. ii. p. 77.), that the Christians were perpetually correcting and altering their Gospels.

<sup>188</sup> Plin. Epist. x. 97. Fuerunt alii similis amentix, cives Romani  
- - - Multi enim omnis ætatis, *omnis ordinis*, utriusque sexus, etiam vocantur in periculum et vocabuntur.

<sup>189</sup> Tertullian ad Scapulam. Yet even his rhetoric rises no higher than to claim a *tenth* part of Carthage.

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the Christian sect<sup>99</sup>. The church still continued to increase its outward splendour as it lost its internal purity; and, in the reign of Diocletian, the palace, the courts of justice, and even the army, concealed a multitude of Christians, who endeavoured to reconcile the interests of the present, with those of a future life.

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And yet these exceptions are either too few in number, or too recent in time, entirely to remove the imputation of ignorance and obscurity which has been so arrogantly cast on the first profelytes of Christianity. Instead of employing in our defence the fictions of later ages, it will be more prudent to convert the occasion of scandal into a subject of edification. Our serious thoughts will suggest to us, that the apostles themselves were chosen by providence among the fishermen of Galilee, and that the lower we depress the temporal condition of the first Christians, the more reason we shall find to admire their merit and success. It is incumbent on us diligently to remember, that the kingdom of Heaven was promised to the poor in spirit, and that minds afflicted by calamity and the contempt of mankind, cheerfully listen to the divine promise of future happiness; while, on the contrary, the fortunate are satisfied with the possession of this world; and the wise abuse in doubt and dispute their vain superiority of reason and knowledge.

Christian-  
ity most fa-  
vourably  
received by  
the poor  
and simple.

<sup>99</sup> Cyprian. Epi<sup>st</sup>. 79.

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Rejected  
by some  
eminent  
men of the  
first and  
second cen-  
turies.

We stand in need of such reflections to comfort us for the loss of some illustrious characters, which in our eyes might have seemed the most worthy of the heavenly present. The names of Seneca, of the elder and the younger Pliny, of Tacitus, of Plutarch, of Galen, of the slave Epictetus, and of the emperor Marcus Antoninus, adorn the age in which they flourished, and exalt the dignity of human nature. They filled with glory their respective stations, either in active or contemplative life; their excellent understandings were improved by study; Philosophy had purified their minds from the prejudices of the popular superstition; and their days were spent in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue. Yet all these sages (it is no less an object of surprise than of concern) overlooked or rejected the perfection of the Christian system. Their language or their silence equally discover their contempt for the growing sect, which in their time had diffused itself over the Roman empire. Those among them who condescend to mention the Christians, consider them only as obstinate and perverse enthusiasts, who exacted an implicit submission to their mysterious doctrines, without being able to produce a single argument that could engage the attention of men of sense and learning<sup>191</sup>.

<sup>191</sup> Dr. Lardner, in his first and second volume of Jewish and Christian testimonies, collects and illustrates those of Pliny the younger, of Tacitus, of Galen, of Marcus Antoninus, and perhaps of Epictetus (for it is doubtful whether that philosopher means to speak of the Christians). The new sect is totally unnoticed by Seneca, the elder Pliny, and Plutarch.

It is at least doubtful whether any of these philosophers perused the apologies which the primitive Christians repeatedly published in behalf of themselves and of their religion ; but it is much to be lamented that such a cause was not defended by abler advocates. They expose with superfluous wit and eloquence, the extravagance of Polytheism. They interest our compassion by displaying the innocence and sufferings of their injured brethren. But when they would demonstrate the divine origin of Christianity, they insist much more strongly on the predictions which announced, than on the miracles which accompanied, the appearance of the Messiah. Their favourite argument might serve to edify a Christian or to convert a Jew, since both the one and the other acknowledge the authority of those prophecies, and both are obliged, with devout reverence, to search for their sense and their accomplishment. But this mode of persuasion loses much of its weight and influence, when it is addressed to those who neither understand nor respect the Mosaic dispensation and the prophetic style<sup>192</sup>. In the unskilful hands of Justin and of the succeeding apologists, the sublime meaning of the Hebrew oracles evaporates in distant types, affected conceits, and cold alle-

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Their  
neglect of  
prophecy

<sup>192</sup> If the famous prophecy of the Seventy Weeks had been alleged to a Roman philosopher, would he not have replied in the words of Cicero, " Quæ tandem ista auguratio est, annorum potius quam aut mensium aut dierum ?" De Divinatione, ii. 30. Observe with what irreverence Lucian (in Alexandro, c. 13.) and his friend Celsus ap. Origen (l. vii. p. 327.) express themselves concerning the Hebrew prophets.

gories ;

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gories; and even their authenticity was rendered suspicious to an unenlightened Gentile, by the mixture of pious forgeries, which, under the names of Orpheus, Hermes, and the Sibyls<sup>193</sup>, were obtruded on him as of equal value with the genuine inspirations of Heaven. The adoption of fraud and sophistry in the defence of revelation, too often reminds us of the injudicious conduct of those poets who load their *invulnerable* heroes with a useless weight of cumbersome and brittle armour.

and of  
miracles.

But how shall we excuse the supine inattention of the Pagan and philosophic world, to those evidences which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason, but to their senses? During the age of Christ, of his apostles, and of their first disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by innumerable prodigies. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, dæmons were expelled, and the laws of Nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the church. But the fages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alterations in the moral or physical govern-

General  
silence  
concerning  
the dark-  
ness of the  
Passion.

<sup>193</sup> The Philosophers, who derided the more ancient predictions of the Sibyls, would easily have detected the Jewish and Christian forgeries, which have been so triumphantly quoted by the fathers, from Justin Martyr to Lactantius. When the Sibylline verses had performed their appointed task, they, like the system of the millennium, were quietly laid aside. The Christian Sibyl had unluckily fixed the ruin of Rome for the year 195, A. U. C. 948.

ment of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius, the whole earth <sup>194</sup>, or at least a celebrated province of the Roman empire <sup>195</sup>, was involved in a præternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, and the devotion of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history <sup>196</sup>. It happened during the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers, in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phenomena of Nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses, which his indefatigable curiosity could collect <sup>197</sup>. Both the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe. A distinct chapter of Pliny <sup>198</sup> is designed for eclipses of an extraordinary nature and unusual duration; but he contents himself with describ-

<sup>194</sup> The fathers, as they are drawn out in battle array by Dom Calmet (*Dissertations sur la Bible*, tom. iii. p. 295—308.), seem to cover the whole earth with darkness, in which they are followed by most of the moderns.

<sup>195</sup> Origen ad Matth. c. 27. and a few modern critics, Beza, Le Clerc, Lardner, &c. are desirous of confining it to the land of Judea.

<sup>196</sup> The celebrated passage of Phlegon is now wisely abandoned. When Tertullian assures the Pagans, that the mention of the prodigy is found in *Arcanis* (not *Archivis*) *vestris* (see his *Apology*, c. 21.), he probably appeals to the Sibylline verses, which relate it exactly in the words of the Gospel.

<sup>197</sup> Seneca *Quæst. Natur.* i. 1. 15. vi. 1. vii. 17. Plin: *Hist. Natur.* l. ii.

<sup>198</sup> Plin. *Hist. Natur.* ii. 30.

ing

**Q. H. A. P.** ing the singular defect of light which followed  
**XV.** the murder of Cæsar, when, during the greatest  
 part of the year, the orb of the sun appeared pale  
 and without splendour. This season of obscurity,  
 which cannot surely be compared with the præ-  
 ternatural darkness of the Passion, had been  
 already celebrated by most of the poets<sup>199</sup> and  
 historians of that memorable age<sup>200</sup>.

<sup>199</sup> Virgil. *Georgic.* i. 466. Tibullus, l. i. *Eleg.* v. ver. 75.  
 Ovid. *Metamorph.* xv. 782. Lucan. *Pharsal.* i. 540. The last of  
 these poets places this prodigy before the civil war.

<sup>200</sup> See a public epistle of M. Antony in Joseph. *Antiquit.* xiv.  
 22. Plutarch in Cæsar. p. 471. Appian, *Bell. Civil.* l. iv. Dion  
 Cassius, l. xlv. p. 431. Julius Obsequens, c. 128. His little trea-  
 tise is an abstract of Livy's prodigies.

## CHAP. XVI.

*The Conduct of the Roman Government towards the Christians, from the Reign of Nero to that of Constantine.*

**I**F we seriously consider the purity of the Christian religion, the sanctity of its moral precepts, and the innocent as well as austere lives of the greater number of those, who during the first ages embraced the faith of the gospel, we should naturally suppose, that so benevolent a doctrine would have been received with due reverence, even by the unbelieving world; that the learned and the polite, however they might deride the miracles, would have esteemed the virtues of the new sect; and that the magistrates, instead of persecuting, would have protected an order of men who yielded the most passive obedience to the laws, though they declined the active cares of war and government. If, on the other hand, we recollect the universal toleration of Polytheism, as it was invariably maintained by the faith of the people, the incredulity of philosophers, and the policy of the Roman senate and emperors, we are at a loss to discover what new offence the Christians had committed, what new provocation could exasperate the mild indifference of antiquity, and what new motives could urge the Roman princes, who beheld without concern a thousand forms of religion subsisting in peace under their gentle

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Christian-  
ity perse-  
cuted by  
the Roman  
emperors.

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gentle sway, to inflict a severe punishment on any part of their subjects, who had chosen for themselves a singular but an inoffensive mode of faith and worship.

The religious policy of the ancient world seems to have assumed a more stern and intolerant character, to oppose the progress of Christianity. About fourscore years after the death of Christ, his innocent disciples were punished with death by the sentence of a proconsul of the most amiable and philosophic character, and according to the laws of an emperor, distinguished by the wisdom and justice of his general administration. The apologies which were repeatedly addressed to the successors of Trajan are filled with the most pathetic complaints, that the Christians who obeyed the dictates, and solicited the liberty of conscience, were alone, among all the subjects of the Roman empire, excluded from the common benefits of their auspicious government. The deaths of a few eminent martyrs have been recorded with care; and from the time that Christianity was invested with the supreme power, the governors of the church have been no less diligently employed in displaying the cruelty, than in imitating the conduct, of their Pagan adversaries. To separate (if it be possible) a few authentic as well as interesting facts from an undigested mass of fiction and error, and to relate, in a clear and rational manner, the causes, the extent, the duration, and the most important circumstances of the persecutions to which the  
first

first Christians were exposed, is the design of the present Chapter.

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XVI.

Inquiry  
into their  
motives.

The sectaries of a persecuted religion, depressed by fear, animated with resentment, and perhaps heated by enthusiasm, are seldom in a proper temper of mind calmly to investigate, or candidly to appreciate, the motives of their enemies, which often escape the impartial and discerning view even of those who are placed at a secure distance from the flames of persecution. A reason has been assigned for the conduct of the emperors towards the primitive Christians, which may appear the more specious and probable as it is drawn from the acknowledged genius of Polytheism. It has already been observed, that the religious concord of the world was principally supported by the implicit assent and reverence which the nations of antiquity expressed for their respective traditions and ceremonies. It might therefore be expected, that they would unite with indignation against any sect or people which should separate itself from the communion of mankind, and claiming the exclusive possession of divine knowledge, should disdain every form of worship except its own, as impious and idolatrous. The rights of toleration were held by mutual indulgence: they were justly forfeited by a refusal of the accustomed tribute. As the payment of this tribute was inflexibly refused by the Jews, and by them alone, the consideration of the treatment which they experienced

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Rebellious  
spirit of  
the Jews.

rienced from the Roman magistrates, will serve to explain how far these speculations are justified by facts, and will lead us to discover the true causes of the persecution of Christianity.

Without repeating what has been already mentioned, of the reverence of the Roman princes and governors for the temple of Jerusalem, we shall only observe, that the destruction of the temple and city was accompanied and followed by every circumstance that could exasperate the minds of the conquerors, and authorize religious persecution by the most specious arguments of political justice and the public safety. From the reign of Nero to that of Antoninus Pius, the Jews discovered a fierce impatience of the dominion of Rome, which repeatedly broke out in the most furious massacres and insurrections. Humanity is shocked at the recital of the horrid cruelties which they committed in the cities of Egypt, of Cyprus, and of Cyrene, where they dwelt in treacherous friendship with the unsuspecting natives<sup>1</sup>; and we are tempted to applaud the severe retaliation which was exercised by the arms of the legions against a race of fanatics, whose dire and credulous superstition seemed to render them the implacable enemies not only of

<sup>1</sup> In Cyrene they massacred 220,000 Greeks; in Cyprus, 240,000; in Egypt, a very great multitude. Many of these unhappy victims were fawed asunder, according to a precedent to which David had given the sanction of his example. The victorious Jews devoured the flesh, licked up the blood, and twisted the entrails like a girdle round their bodies. See Dion Cassius, l. lxxviii. p. 1145.

the

he Roman government, but of humankind<sup>2</sup>. The enthusiasm of the Jews was supported by the opinion, that it was unlawful for them to pay taxes to an idolatrous master; and by the flattering promise which they derived from their ancient oracles, that a conquering Messiah would soon arise, destined to break their fetters, and to invest the favourites of heaven with the empire of the earth. It was by announcing himself as their long-expected deliverer, and by calling on all the descendants of Abraham to assert the hope of Israel, that the famous Barchochabas collected a formidable army, with which he resisted during two years the power of the emperor Hadrian<sup>3</sup>.

Notwithstanding these repeated provocations, the resentment of the Roman princes expired after the victory; nor were their apprehensions continued beyond the period of war and danger. By the general indulgence of polytheism, and by the mild temper of Antoninus Pius, the Jews were restored to their ancient privileges, and once more obtained the permission of circumcising their children, with the easy restraint, that they should never confer on any foreign proselyte

Toleration  
of the  
Jewish re-  
ligion.

<sup>2</sup> Without repeating the well-known narratives of Josephus, we may learn from Dion (l. lxi. p. 1162.), that in Hadrian's war 580,000 Jews were cut off by the sword, besides an infinite number which perished by famine, by disease, and by fire.

<sup>3</sup> For the sect of the Zealots, see Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. i. c. 17. for the characters of the Messiah, according to the Rabbis, l. v. c. 11, 12, 13. for the actions of Barchochabas, l. vii. c. 12.

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that distinguishing mark of the Hebrew race<sup>4</sup>. The numerous remains of that people, though they were still excluded from the precincts of Jerusalem, were permitted to form and to maintain considerable establishments both in Italy and in the provinces, to acquire the freedom of Rome, to enjoy municipal honours, and to obtain at the same time an exemption from the burdensome and expensive offices of society. The moderation or the contempt of the Romans gave a legal sanction to the form of ecclesiastical police which was instituted by the vanquished sect. The patriarch, who had fixed his residence at Tiberias, was empowered to appoint his subordinate ministers and apostles, to exercise a domestic jurisdiction, and to receive from his dispersed brethren an annual contribution<sup>5</sup>. New synagogues were frequently erected in the principal cities of the empire; and the sabbaths, the fasts, and the festivals, which were either commanded by the Mosaic law, or enjoined by the traditions of the Rabbis, were celebrated in the most solemn and public manner<sup>6</sup>. Such gentle treatment insensibly assuaged the stern temper of the Jews. Awakened from their dream of prophecy and

<sup>4</sup> It is to Modestinus, a Roman lawyer (l. vi. regular.), that we are indebted for a distinct knowledge of the Edict of Antoninus. See Casaubon ad Hist. August. p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> See Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. iii. c. 2, 3. The office of Patriarch was suppressed by Theodosius the younger.

<sup>6</sup> We need only mention the purim, or deliverance of the Jews from the rage of Haman, which, till the reign of Theodosius, was celebrated with insolent triumph and riotous intemperance. Basnage, *Hist. des Juifs*, l. vi. c. 17. l. viii. c. 6.

conquest,

conquest, they assumed the behaviour of peaceable and industrious subjects. Their irreconcilable hatred of mankind, instead of flaming out in acts of blood and violence, evaporated in less dangerous gratifications. They embraced every opportunity of over-reaching the idolaters in trade; and they pronounced secret and ambiguous imprecations against the haughty kingdom of Edom<sup>7</sup>.

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Since the Jews, who rejected with abhorrence the deities adored by their sovereign and by their fellow-subjects, enjoyed however the free exercise of their unsocial religion; there must have existed some other cause, which exposed the disciples of Christ to those severities from which the posterity of Abraham was exempt: The difference between them is simple and obvious; but, according to the sentiments of antiquity, it was of the highest importance. The Jews were a *nation*; the Christians were a *sect*: and if it was natural for every community to respect the sacred institutions of their neighbours, it was incumbent on them to persevere in those of their ancestors. The voice of oracles, the precepts of philosophers, and the authority of the laws, unanimously enforced this national obligation. By their lofty claim of superior sanctity, the Jews might provoke the Polytheists to consider them

The Jews were a people which followed, the Christians a sect which deserted, the religion of their fathers.

<sup>7</sup> According to the false Josephus, Tsepho, the grandson of Esau, conducted into Italy the army of Æneas, king of Carthage. Another colony of Idumæans, flying from the sword of David, took refuge in the dominions of Romulus. For these, or for other reasons of equal weight, the name of Edom was applied by the Jews to the Roman empire.

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as an odious and impure race. By disdaining the intercourse of other nations they might deserve their contempt. The laws of Moses might be for the most part frivolous or absurd; yet since they had been received during many ages by a large society, his followers were justified by the example of mankind; and it was universally acknowledged, that they had a right to practise what it would have been criminal in them to neglect. But this principle which protected the Jewish synagogue, afforded not any favour or security to the primitive church. By embracing the faith of the Gospel, the Christians incurred the supposed guilt of an unnatural and unpardonable offence. They dissolved the sacred ties of custom and education, violated the religious institutions of their country, and presumptuously despised whatever their fathers had believed as true, or had revered as sacred. Nor was this apostacy (if we may use the expression) merely of a partial or local kind; since the pious deserter who withdrew himself from the temples of Egypt or Syria, would equally disdain to seek an asylum in those of Athens or Carthage. Every Christian rejected with contempt the superstitions of his family, his city, and his province. The whole body of Christians unanimously refused to hold any communion with the gods of Rome, of the empire, and of mankind. It was in vain that the oppressed believer asserted the inalienable rights of conscience and private judgment. Though his situation might excite the pity, his arguments

arguments could never reach the understanding, either of the philosophic or of the believing part of the Pagan world. To their apprehensions, it was no less a matter of surprise, that any individuals should entertain scruples against complying with the established mode of worship, than if they had conceived a sudden abhorrence to the manners, the dress, or the language of their native country<sup>3</sup>.

The surprise of the Pagans was soon succeeded by resentment; and the most pious of men were exposed to the unjust but dangerous imputation of impiety. Malice and prejudice concurred in representing the Christians as a society of atheists, who, by the most daring attack on the religious constitution of the empire, had merited the severest animadversion of the civil magistrate. They had separated themselves (they gloried in the confession) from every mode of superstition which was received in any part of the globe by the various temper of polytheism: but it was not altogether so evident what deity, or what form of worship, they had substituted to the gods and temples of antiquity. The pure and sublime idea which they entertained of the Supreme Being escaped the gross conception of the Pagan multitude, who were at a loss to discover

Christianity accused of atheism, and mistaken by the people and philosophers.

<sup>3</sup> From the arguments of Celsus, as they are represented and refuted by Origen (l. v. p. 247—259.), we may clearly discover the distinction that was made between the Jewish *people* and the Christian *sect*. See in the Dialogue of Minucius Felix (c. 5, 6.) a fair and not inelegant description of the popular sentiments, with regard to the desertion of the established worship.

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a spiritual and solitary God, that was neither represented under any corporeal figure or visible symbol, nor was adored with the accustomed pomp of libations and festivals, of altars and sacrifices<sup>9</sup>. The sages of Greece and Rome, who had elevated their minds to the contemplation of the existence and attributes of the First Cause, were induced by reason or by vanity to reserve for themselves and their chosen disciples the privilege of this philosophical devotion<sup>10</sup>. They were far from admitting the prejudices of mankind as the standard of truth, but they considered them as flowing from the original disposition of human nature; and they supposed that any popular mode of faith and worship which presumed to disclaim the assistance of the senses, would, in proportion as it receded from superstition, find itself incapable of restraining the wanderings of the fancy and the visions of fanaticism. The careless glance which men of wit and learning condescended to cast on the Christian revelation, served only to confirm their hasty opinion, and to persuade them, that the principle, which they might have revered, of the divine unity, was defaced by the wild enthusiasm,

<sup>9</sup> Cur nullas aras habent? templa nulla? nulla nota simulacra?  
- - - Unde autem, vel quis ille, aut ubi, Deus unicus, solitarius, destitutus? Minucius Fœlix, c. 10. The Pagan interlocutor goes on to make a distinction in favour of the Jews, who had once a temple, altars, victims, &c.

<sup>10</sup> It is difficult (says Plato) to attain, and dangerous to publish, the knowledge of the true God. See the *Theologie des Philosophes*, in the Abbé d'Olivet's French translation of Tully de *Naturâ Deorum*, tom. i. p. 275.

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and annihilated by the airy speculations, of the new sectaries. The author of a celebrated dialogue, which has been attributed to Lucian, whilst he affects to treat the mysterious subject of the Trinity in a style of ridicule and contempt, betrays his own ignorance of the weakness of human reason, and of the inscrutable nature of the Divine perfections<sup>11</sup>.

It might appear less surprising, that the founder of Christianity should not only be revered by his disciples as a sage and a prophet, but that he should be adored as a God. The Polytheists were disposed to adopt every article of faith, which seemed to offer any resemblance, however distant or imperfect, with the popular mythology; and the legends of Bacchus, of Hercules, and of Æsculapius, had, in some measure, prepared their imagination for the appearance of the Son of God under a human form<sup>12</sup>. But they were astonished that the Christians should abandon the temples of those ancient heroes, who, in the

<sup>11</sup> The author of the *Philopatris* perpetually treats the Christians as a company of dreaming enthusiasts, *δαιμονιοι, αθηριοι, ἀνδροπαταροντες, αεροπαταροντες*, &c. and in one place manifestly alludes to the vision, in which St. Paul was transported to the third heaven. In another place, Triphon, who personates a Christian, after deriding the Gods of Paganism, proposes a mysterious oath,

Υψιμεδοντα βρον, μεγαν, αμφοτον, υρηνωνα,

Υιον παλσθ, πνευμα εκ παλσθ εκπορευομενον

Εν εκ τριων, και ες ενθ τρια.

*Αριμειν με διδασκεις* (is the profane answer of Critias), *και ορκθ η αριδμηληκη*· εκ οιδα γαρ τι λεγεις· εν τρια, τρια εν!

<sup>12</sup> According to Justin Martyr (*Apolog. Major*, c. 70—85.), the *dæmon*, who had gained some imperfect knowledge of the prophecies, purposely contrived this resemblance, which might deter, though by different means, both the people and the philosophers from embracing the faith of Christ.

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infancy of the world, had invented arts, instituted laws, and vanquished the tyrants or monsters who infested the earth; in order to choose for the exclusive object of their religious worship, an obscure teacher, who, in a recent age, and among a barbarous people, had fallen a sacrifice either to the malice of his own countrymen, or to the jealousy of the Roman government. The Pagan multitude, reserving their gratitude for temporal benefits alone, rejected the inestimable present of life and immortality, which was offered to mankind by Jesus of Nazareth. His mild constancy in the midst of cruel and voluntary sufferings, his universal benevolence, and the sublime simplicity of his actions and character, were insufficient, in the opinion of those carnal men, to compensate for the want of fame, of empire, and of success; and whilst they refused to acknowledge his stupendous triumph over the powers of darkness and of the grave, they misrepresented, or they insulted, the equivocal birth, wandering life, and ignominious death, of the divine Author of Christianity<sup>13</sup>.

The union and assemblies of the Christians considered as a dangerous conspiracy.

The personal guilt which every Christian had contracted, in thus preferring his private sentiment to the national religion, was aggravated in a very high degree by the number and union of the criminals. It is well known, and has been already observed, that Roman policy viewed with

<sup>13</sup> In the first and second books of Origen, Celsus treats the birth and character of our Saviour with the most impious contempt. The orator Libanius praises Porphyry and Julian for confuting the folly of a sect, which styled a dead man of Palestine, God, and the son of God. Socrates, Hist. Ecclesiast. iii. 23.

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the utmost jealousy and distrust any association among its subjects; and that the privileges of private corporations, though formed for the most harmless or beneficial purposes, were bestowed with a very sparing hand<sup>14</sup>. The religious assemblies of the Christians, who had separated themselves from the public worship, appeared of a much less innocent nature: they were illegal in their principle, and in their consequences might become dangerous; nor were the emperors conscious that they violated the laws of justice, when, for the peace of society, they prohibited those secret and sometimes nocturnal meetings<sup>15</sup>. The pious disobedience of the Christians made their conduct, or perhaps their designs, appear in a much more serious and criminal light; and the Roman princes, who might perhaps have suffered themselves to be disarmed by a ready submission, deeming their honour concerned in the execution of their commands, sometimes attempted, by rigorous punishments, to subdue this independent spirit, which boldly acknowledged an authority superior to that of the magistrate. The extent and duration of this spiritual conspiracy seemed to render it every day more deserving of his animadversion. We have already seen that the active and successful zeal of

<sup>14</sup> The emperor Trajan refused to incorporate a company of 150 firemen, for the use of the city of Nicomedia. He disliked all associations. See Plin. Epist. x. 42, 43.

<sup>15</sup> The proconsul Pliny had published a general edict against unlawful meetings. The prudence of the Christians suspended their Agapæ; but it was impossible for them to omit the exercise of public worship.

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the Christians had insensibly diffused them through every province and almost every city of the empire. The new converts seemed to renounce their family and country, that they might connect themselves in an indissoluble band of union with a peculiar society, which every where assumed a different character from the rest of mankind. Their gloomy and austere aspect, their abhorrence of the common business and pleasures of life, and their frequent predictions of impending calamities<sup>16</sup>, inspired the Pagans with the apprehension of some danger, which would arise from the new sect, the more alarming as it was the more obscure. "Whatever," says Pliny, "may be the principle of their conduct, their inflexible obstinacy appeared deserving of punishment<sup>17</sup>."

Their  
manners  
calumni-  
ated.

The precautions with which the disciples of Christ performed the offices of religion were at first dictated by fear and necessity; but they were continued from choice. By imitating the awful secrecy which reigned in the Eleusinian mysteries, the Christians had flattered themselves that they should render their sacred institutions more respectable in the eyes of the Pagan world<sup>18</sup>. But

<sup>16</sup> As the prophecies of the Antichrist, approaching conflagration, &c. provoked those Pagans whom they did not convert, they were mentioned with caution and reserve; and the Montanists were censured for disclosing too freely the dangerous secret. See Mosheim, p. 413.

<sup>17</sup> Neque enim dubitabam, quodcunque esset quod faterentur (such are the words of Pliny), pervicaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri.

<sup>18</sup> See Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. p. 201. and Spanheim, Remarques sur les Césars de Julien, p. 468, &c.

the event, as it often happens to the operations of subtile policy, deceived their wishes and their expectations. It was concluded, that they only concealed, what they would have blushed to disclose. Their mistaken prudence afforded an opportunity for malice to invent, and for suspicious credulity to believe, the horrid tales which described the Christians as the most wicked of human kind, who practised in their dark recesses every abomination that a depraved fancy could suggest, and who solicited the favour of their unknown God by the sacrifice of every moral virtue. There were many who pretended to confess or to relate the ceremonies of this abhorred society. It was asserted, “ that a new-born infant, entirely covered over with flour, was presented, like some mystic symbol of initiation, to the knife of the proselyte, who unknowingly inflicted many a secret and mortal wound on the innocent victim of his error; that as soon as the cruel deed was perpetrated, the sectaries drank up the blood, greedily tore asunder the quivering members, and pledged themselves to eternal secrecy, by a mutual consciousness of guilt. It was as confidently affirmed, that this inhuman sacrifice was succeeded by a suitable entertainment, in which intemperance served as a provocative to brutal lust; till, at the appointed moment, the lights were suddenly extinguished, shame was banished, nature was forgotten; and, as accident might direct, the darkness of the night

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“ was polluted by the incestuous commerce of  
“ sisters and brothers, of sons and of mo-  
“ thers<sup>19</sup>.”

Their im-  
prudent  
defence.

But the perusal of the ancient apologies was sufficient to remove even the slightest suspicion from the mind of a candid adversary. The Christians, with the intrepid security of innocence, appeal from the voice of rumour to the equity of the magistrates. They acknowledge, that if any proof can be produced of the crimes which calumny has imputed to them, they are worthy of the most severe punishment. They provoke the punishment, and they challenge the proof. At the same time they urge, with equal truth and propriety, that the charge is not less devoid of probability, than it is destitute of evidence; they ask, whether any one can seriously believe that the pure and holy precepts of the Gospel, which so frequently restrained the use of the most lawful enjoyments, should inculcate the practice of the most abominable crimes; that a large society should resolve to dishonour itself in the eyes of its own members; and that a great number of persons of either sex, and every age and character, insensible to the fear of death or infamy, should consent to violate those principles which nature and education had imprinted most

<sup>19</sup> See Justin Martyr, Apolog. i. 35. ii. 14. Athenagoras in Legation. c. 27. Tertullian, Apolog. c. 7, 8, 9. Minucius Fœlix, c. 9, 10. 30, 31. The last of these writers relates the accusation in the most elegant and circumstantial manner. The answer of Tertullian is the boldest and most vigorous.

deeply in their minds<sup>20</sup>. Nothing, it should seem, could weaken the force or destroy the effect of so unanswerable a justification, unless it were the injudicious conduct of the apologists themselves, who betrayed the common cause of religion, to gratify their devout hatred to the domestic enemies of the church. It was sometimes faintly insinuated, and sometimes boldly asserted, that the same bloody sacrifices, and the same incestuous festivals, which were so falsely ascribed to the orthodox believers, were in reality celebrated by the Marcionites, by the Carpocratians, and by several other sects of the Gnostics, who, notwithstanding they might deviate into the paths of heresy, were still actuated by the sentiments of men, and still governed by the precepts of Christianity<sup>21</sup>. Accusations of a similar kind were retorted upon the church by the schismatics who had departed from its communion<sup>22</sup>, and it was confessed on all sides, that the

<sup>20</sup> In the persecution of Lyons, some Gentile slaves were compelled, by the fear of tortures, to accuse their Christian master. The church of Lyons, writing to their brethren of Asia, treat the horrid charge with proper indignation and contempt. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. v. 1.

<sup>21</sup> See Justin Martyr, Apolog. i. 35. Irenæus adv. Hæres. i. 24. Clemens Alexandrin. Stromat. l. iii. p. 438. Euseb. iv. 8. It would be tedious and disgusting to relate all that the succeeding writers have imagined, all that Epiphanius has received, and all that Tillemont has copied. M. de Beausobre (Hist. du Manichéisme, l. ix. c. 8, 9.) has exposed, with great spirit, the disingenuous arts of Augustin and Pope Leo I.

<sup>22</sup> When Tertullian became a Montanist, he asperged the morals of the church which he had so resolutely defended. "Sed majoris est Agape, quia per hanc adolescentes tui eum sororibus dormiunt,"  
"appendices

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the most scandalous licentiousness of manners prevailed among great numbers of those who affected the name of Christians. A Pagan magistrate, who possessed neither leisure nor abilities to discern the almost imperceptible line which divides the orthodox faith from heretical pravity, might easily have imagined that their mutual animosity had extorted the discovery of their common guilt. It was fortunate for the repose, or at least for the reputation, of the first Christians, that the magistrates sometimes proceeded with more temper and moderation than is usually consistent with religious zeal, and that they reported, as the impartial result of their judicial inquiry, that the sectaries, who had deserted the established worship, appeared to them sincere in their professions, and blameless in their manners; however they might incur, by their absurd and excessive superstition, the censure of the laws<sup>23</sup>.

Idea of the  
conduct of  
the emper-  
ors to-  
wards the  
Christians.

History, which undertakes to record the transactions of the past, for the instruction of future ages, would ill deserve that honourable office, if she condescended to plead the cause of tyrants, or to justify the maxims of persecution. It must, however, be acknowledged, that the conduct of the emperors who appeared the least favourable

“appendices scilicet gulæ lascivia et luxuria.” De Jeuniis, c. 17. The 35th canon of the council of Illiberis provides against the scandals which too often polluted the vigils of the church, and disgraced the Christian name in the eyes of unbelievers.

<sup>23</sup> Tertullian (Apolo. c. 2) expatiates on the fair and honourable testimony of Pliny, with much reason, and some declamation.

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to the primitive church, is by no means so criminal as that of modern sovereigns, who have employed the arm of violence and terror against the religious opinions of any part of their subjects. From their reflections, or even from their own feelings, a Charles V. or a Louis XIV. might have acquired a just knowledge of the rights of conscience, of the obligation of faith, and of the innocence of error. But the princes and magistrates of ancient Rome were strangers to those principles which inspired and authorised the inflexible obstinacy of the Christians in the cause of truth, nor could they themselves discover in their own breasts, any motive which would have prompted them to refuse a legal, and as it were a natural, submission to the sacred institutions of their country. The same reason which contributes to alleviate the guilt, must have tended to abate the rigour, of their persecutions. As they were actuated, not by the furious zeal of bigots, but by the temperate policy of legislators, contempt must often have relaxed, and humanity must frequently have suspended the execution of those laws, which they enacted against the humble and obscure followers of Christ. From the general view of their character and motives we might naturally conclude : I. That a considerable time elapsed before they considered the new sectaries as an object deserving of the attention of government. II. That in the conviction of any of their subjects who were accused of so very singular a crime, they  
proceeded

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proceeded with caution and reluctance. III. That they were moderate in the use of punishments; and IV. That the afflicted church enjoyed many intervals of peace and tranquillity. Notwithstanding the careless indifference which the most copious and the most minute of the Pagan writers have shewn to the affairs of the Christians<sup>24</sup>, it may still be in our power to confirm each of these probable suppositions, by the evidence of authentic facts.

They neglected the Christians as a sect of Jews.

I. By the wise dispensation of Providence, a mysterious veil was cast over the infancy of the church, which, till the faith of the Christians was matured, and their numbers were multiplied, served to protect them not only from the malice but even from the knowledge of the Pagan world. The slow and gradual abolition of the Mosaic ceremonies afforded a safe and innocent disguise to the more early proselytes of the Gospel. As they were far the greater part of the race of Abraham, they were distinguished by the peculiar mark of circumcision, offered up their devotions in the Temple of Jerusalem till its final destruction, and received both the Law and the Prophets as the genuine inspirations of the Deity. The Gentile converts, who by a spiritual adoption had been associated to the hope of Israel, were likewise confounded under the

<sup>24</sup> In the various compilation of the Augustan History (a part of which was composed under the reign of Constantine), there are not six lines which relate to the Christians; nor has the diligence of Xiphilin discovered their name in the large history of Dion Cassius.

garb and appearance of Jews<sup>25</sup>, and as the Polytheists paid less regard to articles of faith than to the external worship, the new sect, which carefully concealed, or faintly announced, its future greatness and ambition, was permitted to shelter itself under the general toleration which was granted to an ancient and celebrated people in the Roman empire. It was not long, perhaps, before the Jews themselves, animated with a fiercer zeal and a more jealous faith, perceived the gradual separation of their Nazarene brethren from the doctrine of the synagogue; and they would gladly have extinguished the dangerous heresy in the blood of its adherents. But the decrees of heaven had already disarmed their malice; and though they might sometimes exert the licentious privilege of sedition, they no longer possessed the administration of criminal justice; nor did they find it easy to infuse into the calm breast of a Roman magistrate the rancour of their own zeal and prejudice. The provincial governors declared themselves ready to listen to any accusation that might affect the public safety; but as soon as they were informed that it was a question not of facts but of words, a dispute relating only to the interpretation of the Jewish laws and prophecies, they deemed it unworthy of the majesty of Rome seriously to discuss the obscure differences which might arise among a

<sup>25</sup> An obscure passage of Suetonius (in Claud. c. 25.) may seem to offer a proof how strangely the Jews and Christians of Rome were confounded with each other.

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barbarous and superstitious people. The innocence of the first Christians was protected by ignorance and contempt; and the tribunal of the pagan magistrate often proved their most assured refuge against the fury of the synagogue<sup>26</sup>. If indeed we were disposed to adopt the traditions of a too credulous antiquity, we might relate the distant peregrinations, the wonderful achievements, and the various deaths, of the twelve apostles; but a more accurate inquiry will induce us to doubt, whether any of those persons who had been witnesses to the miracles of Christ, were permitted, beyond the limits of Palestine, to seal with their blood the truth of their testimony<sup>27</sup>. From the ordinary term of human life, it may very naturally be presumed that most of them were deceased before the discontent of the Jews broke out into that furious war, which was terminated only by the ruin of Jerusalem. During a long period, from the death of Christ to that memorable rebellion, we cannot discover any traces of Roman intolerance, unless they are to be found in the sudden, the transient, but the cruel persecution, which

<sup>26</sup> See in the xviii<sup>th</sup> and xxv<sup>th</sup> chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, the behaviour of Gallio, proconsul of Achaia, and of Festus, procurator of Judæa.

<sup>27</sup> In the time of Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria, the glory of martyrdom was confined to St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. James. It was gradually bestowed on the rest of the apostles, by the more recent Greeks, who prudently selected for the theatre of their preaching and sufferings, some remote country beyond the limits of the Roman empire. See Mosheim, p. 81. and Tillemont, *Memoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. i. part iii.

was

was exercised by Nero against the Christians of the capital, thirty-five years after the former, and only two years before the latter of those great events. The character of the philosophic historian, to whom we are principally indebted for the knowledge of this singular transaction, would alone be sufficient to recommend it to our most attentive consideration.

In the tenth year of the reign of Nero, the capital of the empire was afflicted by a fire which raged beyond the memory or example of former ages<sup>25</sup>. The monuments of Grecian art and of Roman virtue, the trophies of the Punic and Gallic wars, the most holy temples, and the most splendid palaces, were involved in one common destruction. Of the fourteen regions or quarters into which Rome was divided, four only subsisted entire, three were levelled with the ground, and the remaining seven, which had experienced the fury of the flames, displayed a melancholy prospect of ruin and desolation. The vigilance of government appears not to have neglected any of the precautions which might alleviate the sense of so dreadful a calamity. The Imperial gardens were thrown open to the distressed multitude, temporary buildings were erected for their accommodation, and a plentiful supply of corn and provisions was distributed at

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The fire of Rome under the reign of Nero.

<sup>25</sup> Tacit. Annal. xv. 38—44. Sueton. in Neron. c. 38. Dion Cassius, l. lxii. p. 1014. Orosius, vii. 7.

a very moderate price<sup>29</sup>. The most generous policy seemed to have dictated the edicts which regulated the disposition of the streets and the construction of private houses; and as it usually happens, in an age of prosperity, the conflagration of Rome, in the course of a few years, produced a new city, more regular and more beautiful than the former. But all the prudence and humanity affected by Nero on this occasion were insufficient to preserve him from the popular suspicion. Every crime might be imputed to the assassin of his wife and mother; nor could the prince, who prostituted his person and dignity on the theatre, be deemed incapable of the most extravagant folly. The voice of rumour accused the emperor as the incendiary of his own capital; and as the most incredible stories are the best adapted to the genius of an enraged people, it was gravely reported, and firmly believed, that Nero, enjoying the calamity which he had occasioned, amused himself with singing to his lyre the destruction of ancient Troy<sup>30</sup>. To divert a suspicion which the power of despotism was unable to suppress, the emperor resolved to substitute in his own place some fictitious criminals. “With this view (continues

<sup>29</sup> The price of wheat (probably of the *modius*) was reduced as low as *terni Nummi*; which would be equivalent to about fifteen shillings the English quarter.

<sup>30</sup> We may observe, that the rumour is mentioned by Tacitus with a very becoming distrust and hesitation, whilst it is greedily transcribed by Suetonius, and solemnly confirmed by Dion.

“ Tacitus )

“ Tacitus) he inflicted the most exquisite tor-  
 “ tures on those men, who, under the vulgar  
 “ appellation of Christians, were already branded  
 “ with deserved infamy. They derived their  
 “ name and origin from Christ, who in the  
 “ reign of Tiberius had suffered death, by the  
 “ sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate.”  
 “ For a while this dire superstition was checked ;  
 “ but it again burst forth, and not only spread  
 “ itself over Judæa, the first seat of this mis-  
 “ chievous sect, but was even introduced into  
 “ Rome, the common asylum which receives  
 “ and protects whatever is impure, whatever  
 “ is atrocious. The confessions of those who  
 “ were seized, discovered a great multitude of  
 “ their accomplices, and they were all convicted;  
 “ not so much for the crime of setting fire to  
 “ the city, as for their hatred of human kind.”

“ They

31 This testimony is alone sufficient to expose the anachronism of the Jews, who place the birth of Christ near a century sooner (Bosnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. vi. c. 144-45.) We may learn from Josephus (*Antiquitat.* xviii. 3.), that the procuratorship of Pilate corresponded with the last ten years of Tiberius, A. D. 17—27. As to the particular time of the death of Christ, a very early tradition fixed it to the 25th of March, A. D. 29, under the consulship of the two Gemini (Tertullian *adv. Judæos*, c. 8.). This date, which is adopted by Pagi, cardinal Norris, and Le Cœter, seems at least as probable as the vulgar era, which is placed (I know not from what conjectures) four years later.

32 *Odio homini generis convicti*. These words may either signify the hatred of mankind towards the Christians, or the hatred of the Christians towards mankind. I have preferred the latter sense, as the most agreeable to the style of Tacitus, and to the popular error, of which a precept of the Gospel (see Luke xiv. 26.) had been, perhaps, the

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“ They died in torments, and their torments  
 “ were embittered by insult and derision. Some  
 “ were nailed on crosses; others sewn up in the  
 “ skins of wild beasts, and exposed to the fury  
 “ of dogs or other beasts again; smeared over with  
 “ combustible materials, were used as torches  
 “ to illuminate the darkness of the night. The  
 “ gardens of Nero were destined for the melan-  
 “ choly spectacle, which was accompanied with  
 “ a horse race, and honoured with the presence  
 “ of the emperor, who mingled with the popu-  
 “ lace in the dress and attitude of a charioteer.  
 “ The guilt of the Christians deserved indeed  
 “ the most exemplary punishment, but the pub-  
 “ lic abhorrence was changed into compassa-  
 “ tion, from the opinion that those unhappy  
 “ wretches were sacrificed, not so much to the  
 “ public welfare, as to the cruelty of a jealous  
 “ tyrant.” Those who survey with a curious  
 eye the revolutions of mankind, may observe,  
 that the gardens and circus of Nero on the Va-  
 tican, which were polluted with the blood of  
 the first Christians, have been rendered still more  
 famous by the triumph and by the abuse of the

innocent occasion. My interpretation is justified by the authority of  
 Lipsius, of the Italian, the French, and the English translators of  
 Tacitus, of Moheim (p. 392) of Le Clerc (Historia Ecclesiastica,  
 p. 427.), of Dr. Lardner (Testimonies, vol. i. p. 345.), and of the  
 bishop of Gloucester (Divine Legation, vol. iii. p. 38.). But as the  
 word *consecrated* does not unite very happily with the rest of the sentence,  
 James Grönovius has preferred the reading of *consecrated*, which is au-  
 thorised by the valuable MS. of Florence.

33 Tacit. Annal. xv. 44.

persecuted

persecuted religion. On the same spot, a temple, which far surpasses the ancient glories of the Capitol, has been since erected by the Christian Pontiffs, who, deriving their claim of universal dominion from an humble fisherman of Galilee, have succeeded to the throne of the Cæsars, given laws to the barbarian conquerors of Rome, and extended their spiritual jurisdiction from the coast of the Baltic to the shores of the Pacific Ocean.

But it would be improper to dismiss this account of Nero's persecution, till we have made some observations, that may serve to remove the difficulties with which it is perplexed, and to throw some light on the subsequent history of the church.

1. The most sceptical criticism is obliged to respect the truth of this extraordinary fact, and the integrity of this celebrated passage of Tacitus. The former is confirmed by the diligent and accurate Suetonius, who mentions the punishment which Nero inflicted on the Christians, a sect of men who had embraced a new and criminal superstition". The latter may be proved by the consent of the most ancient manuscripts; by the inimitable character of the style of Tacitus; by his reputation, which

Remarks on the passage of Tacitus relative to the persecution of the Christians by Nero.

<sup>34</sup> Nardini Roma Antica, p. 437. Donatus de Româ Antiquâ, l. iiii. p. 449.

<sup>35</sup> Sueton. in Nerone, c. 16. The epithet of *malefica*, which some sagacious commentators have translated *magical*, is considered by the more rational Modestini as only synonymous to the *exhibiti* of Tacitus.

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guarded his text from the interpolations of pious fraud; and by the purport of his narration, which accused the first Christians of the most atrocious crimes, without insinuating that they possessed any miraculous or even magical powers above the rest of mankind<sup>26</sup>. 2. Notwithstanding it is probable that Tacitus was born some years before the fire of Rome<sup>27</sup>, he could derive only from reading and conversation the knowledge of an event which happened during his infancy. Before he gave himself to the Public, he calmly waited till his genius had attained its full maturity, and he was more than forty years of age, when a grateful regard for the memory of the virtuous Agricola, extorted from him the most early of those historical compositions which will delight and instruct the most distant posterity. After making a trial of his strength in the life of Agricola and the description of Germany, he conceived, and at length executed, a

<sup>26</sup> The passage concerning Jesus Christ, which was inserted into the text of Josephus, between the time of Origen and that of Eusebius, may furnish an example of no vulgar forgery. The accomplishment of the prophecies, the virtues, miracles, and resurrection of Jesus, are distinctly related. Josephus acknowledges that he was the Messiah, and hesitates whether he should call him a man. If any doubt can still remain concerning this celebrated passage, the reader may examine the pointed objections of Le Fevre (*Havercamp. Joseph. tom. ii. p. 267—273.*), the laboured answers of Daubuz (*p. 287—332.*), and the masterly reply (*Bibliothèque Ancienne et Moderne, tom. vii. p. 237—288.*) of an anonymous critic, whom I believe to have been the learned Abbé de Longuerre.

<sup>27</sup> See the lives of Tacitus by Lipsius and the Abbé de la Bleterie, *Dictionnaire de Bayle à l'article TACITE*, and Fabricius, *Biblioth. Latin. tom. ii. p. 386. Edit. Ernest.*

more arduous work; the history of Rome; in thirty books, from the fall of Nero to the accession of Nerva. The administration of Nerva introduced an age of justice and prosperity, which Tacitus had destined for the occupation of his old age"; but when he took a nearer view of his subject, judging, perhaps, that it was a more honourable or a less invidious office, to record the vices of past tyrants, than to celebrate the virtues of a reigning monarch, he chose rather to relate, under the form of annals, the actions of the four immediate successors of Augustus. To collect, to dispose, and to adorn a series of fourscore years, in an immortal work, every sentence of which is pregnant with the deepest observations and the most lively images, was an undertaking sufficient to exercise the genius of Tacitus himself during the greatest part of his life. In the last years of the reign of Trajan, whilst the victorious monarch extended the power of Rome beyond its ancient limits, the historian was describing, in the second and fourth books of his annals, the tyranny of Tiberius"; and the emperor Hadrian must have succeeded to the throne, before Tacitus, in the regular prosecution of his work, could relate the fire of the capital and the cruelty of Nero towards the unfortunate Christians. At the distance of sixty years, it was the duty of the annalist to adopt the narratives of contemporaries; but it was na-

<sup>†</sup> Principatum Divi Nervæ, et imperium Trajani, uberiorem securioremque materiam senectuti seposui. Tacit. Hist. i.

<sup>‡</sup> See Tacit. Annal. ii. 61. iv. 4.

tural

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tural for the philosopher to indulge himself in the description of the origin, the progress, and the character of the new sect, not so much according to the knowledge or prejudices of the age of Nero, as according to those of the time of Hadrian. 3. Tacitus very frequently trusts to the curiosity or reflection of his readers to supply those intermediate circumstances and ideas, which, in his extreme conciseness, he has thought proper to suppress. We may therefore presume to imagine some probable cause which could direct the cruelty of Nero against the Christians of Rome, whose obscurity, as well as innocence, should have shielded them from his indignation, and even from his notice. The Jews, who were numerous in the capital, and oppressed in their own country, were a much fitter object for the suspicions of the emperor and of the people; nor did it seem unlikely that a vanquished nation, who already discovered their abhorrence of the Roman yoke, might have recourse to the most atrocious means of gratifying their implacable revenge. But the Jews possessed very powerful advocates in the palace, and even in the heart of the tyrant; his wife and mistress, the beautiful Poppæa, and a favourite player of the race of Abraham, who had already employed their intercession in behalf of the obnoxious people<sup>40</sup>. In their room it

<sup>40</sup> The player's name was Aliturus. Through the same channel, Josephus (de Vita sua, c. 3.), about two years before, had obtained the pardon and release of some Jewish priests who were prisoners at Rome.

was necessary to offer some other victims, and it might easily be suggested that, although the genuine followers of Moses were innocent of the sins of Rome, there had arisen among them a new and pernicious sect of GALILEANS, which was capable of the most horrid crimes. Under the appellation of GALILEANS, two distinctions of men were confounded, the most opposite to each other in their manners and principles; the disciples who had embraced the faith of Jesus of Nazareth, and the leaders who had followed the standards of Judas the Gaulonite\*. The former were the friends, the latter were the enemies, of humankind; and the only resemblance between them consisted in the same inflexible constancy, which, in the defence of their cause, rendered them insensible of death and torture. The followers of Judas, who impelled their countrymen into rebellion, were soon buried under the ruins of Jerusalem; while those of Jesus, known by the more celebrated name of Christians, dissipated themselves over the Roman empire. How natural was it for Pacivus, in the time of Hadrian, to appropriate to the Christians,

\* The learned Dr. Lardner (*Jewish and Heathen Testimonies*; vol. iii. pp. 202, 203.) has proved that the name of Galileans, was a very ancient, and perhaps the primitive, appellation of the Christians.

† Joseph. *Antiquitar.* xviii. 1, 2. Tillmont, *Ruine des Juifs*, p. 242. The sons of Judas were crucified in the time of Claudius. His grandson Eleazar, after Jerusalem was taken, defended a strong fortress with 460 of his most desperate followers. When the battering-ran had made a breach, they turned their swords against their wives, their children, and at length against their own breasts. They died to the last man.

the

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the guilt and the sufferings; which he might, with far greater truth and justice, have attributed to a sect whose odious memory was almost extinguished! 4. Whatever opinion may be entertained of this conjecture (for it is no more than a conjecture), it is evident that the effect, as well as the cause of Nero's persecution, were confined to the walls of Rome; that the religious tenets of the Galileans, or Christians, were never made a subject of punishment, or even of inquiry; and that, as the idea of their sufferings was, for a long time, connected with the idea of cruelty and injustice, the moderation of succeeding princes inclined them to spare a sect oppressed by a tyrant, whose rage had been usually directed against virtue and innocence.

Oppression  
of the Jews  
and Christians  
by Domitian.

It is somewhat remarkable, that the flames of war consumed almost at the same time the temple of Jerusalem and the Capitol of Rome; and it appears no less singular, that the tribute which devotion had destined to the former, should have been converted by the power of an assaulting victor to adorn and adorn the splen-

43 See Dodwell. *Paucitat. Mart. l. xiii.* The Spanish Inscription in Gruter, p. 238. No. 9, is a manifest and acknowledged forgery, contrived by that noted impostor Cyriacus of Ancona, to flatter the pride and prejudices of the Spaniards. See Ferreras, *Histoire d'Espagne*, tom. i. p. 192.

44 The Capitol was burnt during the civil war between Vespasian and Vespasian, the 19th of December, A. D. 69. On the 10th of August, A. D. 70, the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed by the hands of the Jews themselves, rather than by those of the Romans.

dour

dour of the latter<sup>45</sup>. The emperors levied a general capitation tax on the Jewish people; and although the sum assessed on the head of each individual was inconsiderable, the use for which it was designed, and the severity with which it was exacted, were considered as an insupportable grievance<sup>46</sup>. Since the officers of the revenue extended their unjust claim to many persons who were strangers to the blood or religion of the Jews, it was impossible that the Christians, who had so often sheltered themselves under the shade of the synagogue, should now escape this rapacious persecution. Anxious as they were to avoid the slightest infection of idolatry, their conscience forbade them to contribute to the honour of that dæmon who had assumed the character of the Capitoline Jupiter. As a very numerous though declining party among the Christians still adhered to the law of Moses, their efforts to dissemble their Jewish origin were detected by the decisive test of circumcision<sup>47</sup>: nor were the Roman magistrates at leisure to inquire into the difference of their

<sup>45</sup> The new Capitol was dedicated by Domitian. Sueton. in Domitian. c. 5. Plutarch in Poplicola, tom. i. p. 230. Edit. Bryan. The gilding alone cost 12,000 talents (above two millions and a half). It was the opinion of Martial (l. ix. Epigram 3.), that if the emperor had called in his debts, Jupiter himself, even though he had made a general auction of Olympus, would have been unable to pay two shillings in the pound.

<sup>46</sup> With regard to the tribute, see Dion Cassius, l. lxxvi. p. 1082, with Reimarus's notes. Spanheim, de Off. Numismatum, tom. ii. p. 571. and Basnage, Histoire des Juifs, l. vii. c. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Suetonius (in Domitian. c. 12.) had seen an old man of ninety publicly examined before the procurator's tribunal. This is what Martial calls, *Mentula tributa damnata*.

religious

religious tenets. Among the Christians, who were brought before the tribunal of the emperor, or, as it seems more probable, before that of the procurator of Judæa, two persons are said to have appeared, distinguished by their extraction, which was more truly noble than that of the greatest monarchs. These were the grandsons of St. Jude the apostle, who himself was the brother of Jesus, Christ<sup>42</sup>. Their natural pretensions to the throne of David might perhaps attract the respect of the people, and excite the jealousy of the governor; but the meanness of their garb, and the simplicity of their answers, soon convinced him that they were neither desirous nor capable of disturbing the peace of the Roman empire. They frankly confessed their royal origin, and their near relation to the Messiah; but they disclaimed any temporal views, and professed that his kingdom, which they devoutly expected, was purely of a spiritual and angelic nature. When they were examined concerning their fortune and occupation, they shewed their hands hardened with daily labour, and declared that they derived their whole subsistence

<sup>42</sup> This appellation was at first understood in the most obvious sense, and it was supposed, that the brothers of Jesus were the lawful issue of Joseph and of Mary. A devout respect for the virginity of the mother of God, suggested to the Gnostics, and afterwards to the orthodox Greeks, the expedient of bestowing a second wife on Joseph. The Latins (from the time of Jerome) improved on that hint, asserted the perpetual celibacy of Joseph, and justified by many similar examples the new interpretation that Jude, as well as Simon and James, who are styled the brothers of Jesus Christ, were only his first cousins. See Tillamont, Mem. Ecclesiast. tom. i. part. iii. and Beausobre, Hist. Critique du Manichéisme, l. ii. c. 2.

from the cultivation of a farm near the village of Cocaba, of the extent of about twenty-four English acres<sup>49</sup>, and of the value of nine thousand drachms, or three hundred pounds sterling. The grandsons of St. Jude were dismissed with compassion and contempt<sup>50</sup>.

But although the obscurity of the house of David might protect them from the suspicions of a tyrant, the present greatness of his own family alarmed the pusillanimous temper of Domitian, which could only be appeased by the blood of those Romans whom he either feared, or hated, or esteemed. Of the two sons of his uncle Flavius Sabinus<sup>51</sup>, the elder was soon convicted of treasonable intentions, and the younger, who bore the name of Flavius Clemens, was indebted for his safety to his want of courage and ability<sup>52</sup>. The emperor, for a long time, distinguished so harmless a kinsman by his favour and protection, bestowed on him his own niece Domitilla, adopted the children of that marriage to the hope of the succession, and invested their father with the honours of the consulship. But he had scarcely finished the term of his annual

Execution  
of Clemens  
the consul.

<sup>49</sup> Thirty-nine  $\pi\lambda\epsilon\theta\upsilon\alpha$ , squares of an hundred feet each, which, if strictly computed, would scarcely amount to nine acres. But the probability of circumstances, the practice of other Greek writers, and the authority of M. de Valois, inclined me to believe that the  $\pi\lambda\epsilon\theta\upsilon\alpha$  is used to express the Roman jugerum.

<sup>50</sup> Eusebius, iii. 20. The story is taken from Hegesippus.

<sup>51</sup> See the death and character of Sabinus in Tacitus (Hist. iii. 74, 75.). Sabinus was the elder brother, and, till the accession of Vespasian, had been considered as the principal support of the Flavian family.

<sup>52</sup> Flavius Clementem patruelem suum *contemptissimæ inertie* . . . *extenuissimâ suspitione* interemit. Sueton. in Domitian. c. 15.

magis-

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magistracy, when on a slight pretence he was condemned and executed; Domitilla was banished to a desolate island on the coast of Campania<sup>53</sup>; and sentence either of death or of confiscation were pronounced against a great number of persons who were involved in the same accusation. The guilt imputed to their charge was that of *Atheism* and *Jewish manners*<sup>54</sup>; a singular association of ideas, which cannot with any propriety be applied except to the Christians, as they were obscurely and imperfectly viewed by the magistrates and by the writers of that period. On the strength of so probable an interpretation, and too eagerly admitting the suspicions of a tyrant as an evidence of their honourable crime, the church has placed both Clemens and Domitilla among its first martyrs, and has branded the cruelty of Domitian with the name of the second persecution. But this persecution (if it deserves that epithet) was of no long duration. A few months after the death of Clemens, and the banishment of Domitilla, Stephen, a freedman belonging to the latter, who had enjoyed the favour, but who had not surely embraced the faith, of his mistress, assassinated the emperor in

<sup>53</sup> The isle of Pandataria, according to Dion. Bruttius Præfens (apud Euseb. iii. 18.) banishes her to that of Pontia, which was not far distant from the other. That difference, and a mistake, either of Eusebius, or of his transcribers, have given occasion to suppose two Domitillæ, the wife and the niece of Clemens. See Tillemont, *Mémoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. ii. p. 224.

<sup>54</sup> Dion, l. lxxvii. p. 1112. If the Bruttius Præfens, from whom it is probable that he collected this account, was the correspondent of Pliny (*Epistol.* vii. 3.), we may consider him as a contemporary writer.

his

his palace<sup>55</sup>. The memory of Domitian was condemned by the senate; his acts were rescinded; his exiles recalled; and under the gentle administration of Nerva, while the innocent were restored to their rank and fortunes, even the most guilty either obtained pardon or escaped punishment<sup>56</sup>.

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II. About ten years afterwards, under the reign of Trajan, the younger Pliny was intrusted by his friend and master with the government of Bithynia and Pontus. He soon found himself at a loss to determine by what rule of justice or of law he should direct his conduct in the execution of an office the most repugnant to his humanity. Pliny had never assisted at any judicial proceedings against the Christians, with whose name alone he seems to be acquainted; and he was totally uninformed with regard to the nature of their guilt, the method of their conviction, and the degree of their punishment. In this perplexity he had recourse to his usual expedient, of submitting to the wisdom of Trajan an impartial, and in some respects, a favourable account of the new superstition, requesting the emperor, that he would condescend to resolve his doubts, and to instruct his ignorance<sup>57</sup>. The life of Pliny had been employed in the acquisition of learn-

Ignorance  
of Pliny  
concerning  
the Christ-  
ians.

<sup>55</sup> Suet. in Domit. c. 17. Philostratus in Vit. Apollon. l. viii.

<sup>56</sup> Dion, l. lxxviii. p. 1118. Plin. Epistol. iv. 22.

<sup>57</sup> Plin. Epistol. x. 97. The learned Mosheim expresses himself (p. 127, 132.) with the highest approbation of Pliny's moderate and candid temper. Notwithstanding Dr. Lardner's suspicions (see Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, vol. ii. p. 46.), I am unable to discover any bigotry in his language or proceedings.

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ing, and in the business of the world. Since the age of nineteen he had pleaded with distinction in the tribunals of Rome.<sup>58</sup>, filled a place in the senate, had been invested with the honours of the consulship, and had formed very numerous connexions with every order of men, both in Italy and in the provinces. From *his* ignorance therefore we may derive some useful information. We may assure ourselves, that when he accepted the government of Bithynia, there were no general laws or decrees of the senate in force against the Christians; that neither Trajan nor any of his virtuous predecessors, whose edicts were received into the civil and criminal jurisprudence, had publicly declared their intentions concerning the new sect; and that whatever proceedings had been carried on against the Christians, there were none of sufficient weight and authority to establish a precedent for the conduct of a Roman magistrate.

Trajan and his successors establish a legal mode of proceeding against them.

The answer of Trajan, to which the Christians of the succeeding age have frequently appealed, discovers as much regard for justice and humanity as could be reconciled with his mistaken notions of religious policy.<sup>59</sup> Instead of displaying the implacable zeal of an inquisitor,

<sup>58</sup> Plin. Epist. v. 8. He pleaded his first cause A. D. 81; the year after the famous eruptions of Mount Vesuvius, in which his uncle lost his life.

<sup>59</sup> Plin. Epist. x. 98. Tertullian (Apolog. c. 5.) considers this rescript as a relaxation of the ancient penal laws, "quas Trajanus ex parte frustratus est;" and yet Tertullian, in another part of his Apologists, exposes the inconsistency of prohibiting inquiries, and enjoining punishments.

.. anxious

anxious to discover the most minute particles of heresy, and exulting in the number of his victims, the emperor expresses much more solicitude to protect the security of the innocent, than to prevent the escape of the guilty. He acknowledges the difficulty of fixing any general plan; but he lays down two salutary rules, which often afforded relief and support to the distressed Christians. Though he directs the magistrates to punish such persons as are legally convicted, he prohibits them, with a very humane inconsistency, from making any inquiries concerning the supposed criminals. Nor was the magistrate allowed to proceed on every kind of information. Anonymous charges the emperor rejects, as too repugnant to the equity of his government; and he strictly requires, for the conviction of those to whom the guilt of Christianity is imputed, the positive evidence of a fair and open accuser. It is likewise probable, that the persons who assumed so invidious an office, were obliged to declare the grounds of their suspicions, to specify (both in respect to time and place) the secret assemblies, which their Christian adversary had frequented, and to disclose a great number of circumstances, which were concealed with the most vigilant jealousy from the eye of the profane. If they succeeded in their prosecution, they were exposed to the resentment of a considerable and active party, to the censure of the more liberal portion of mankind, and to the ignominy which, in every age and country, has

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attended the character of an informer. If, on the contrary, they failed in their proofs, they incurred the severe and perhaps capital penalty, which, according to a law published by the emperor Hadrian, was inflicted on those who falsely attributed to their fellow-citizens the crime of Christianity. The violence of personal or superstitious animosity might sometimes prevail over the most natural apprehensions of disgrace and danger; but it cannot surely be imagined, that accusations of so unpromising an appearance were either lightly or frequently undertaken by the Pagan subjects of the Roman empire<sup>60</sup>.

Poplar  
clamours.

The expedient which was employed to elude the prudence of the laws, affords a sufficient proof how effectually they disappointed the mischievous designs of private malice or superstitious zeal. In a large and tumultuous assembly the restraints of fear and shame, so forcible on the minds of individuals, are deprived of the greatest part of their influence. The pious Christian, as he was desirous to obtain or to escape the glory of martyrdom, expected, either with impatience or with terror, the stated returns of the public games and festivals. On those occasions, the inhabitants of the great cities of the empire were collected in the circus of the theatre, where every circumstance of the place, as well as of the

<sup>60</sup> Eusebius (Hist. Ecclesiast. l. iv. c. 9.) has preserved the edict of Hadrian. He has likewise (c. 13.) given us one still more favourable under the name of Antoninus; the authenticity of which is not so universally allowed. The second Apology of Justin contains some curious particulars relative to the accusations of Christians.

ceremony, contributed to kindle their devotion, and to extinguish their humanity. Whilst the numerous spectators, crowned with garlands, perfumed with incense, purified with the blood of victims, and surrounded with the altars and statues of their tutelary deities, resigned themselves to the enjoyment of pleasures, which they considered as an essential part of their religious worship; they recollected, that the Christians alone abhorred the gods of mankind, and by their absence and melancholy on these solemn festivals, seemed to insult or to lament the public felicity. If the empire had been afflicted by any recent calamity, by a plague, a famine, or an unsuccessful war; if the Tyber had, or if the Nile had not, risen beyond its banks; if the earth had shaken, or if the temperate order of the seasons had been interrupted, the superstitious Pagans were convinced, that the crimes and the impiety of the Christians, who were spared by the excessive lenity of the government, had at length provoked the Divine Justice. It was not among a licentious and exasperated populace, that the forms of legal proceedings could be observed; it was not in an amphitheatre, stained with the blood of wild beasts and gladiators, that the voice of compassion could be heard. The impatient clamours of the multitude denounced the Christians as the enemies of gods and men, doomed them to the severest tortures, and venturing to accuse by name some of the most distinguished of the new sectaries, required with irresistible vehemence that they should be instantly apprehended

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headed and cast to the lions<sup>61</sup>. The provincial governors and magistrates who presided in the public spectacles were usually inclined to gratify the inclinations, and to appease the rage, of the people, by the sacrifice of a few obnoxious victims. But the wisdom of the emperors protected the church from the danger of these tumultuous clamours and irregular accusations, which they justly censured as repugnant both to the firmness and to the equity of their administration. The edicts of Hadrian and of Antoninus Pius expressly declared, that the voice of the multitude should never be admitted as legal evidence to convict or to punish those unfortunate persons who had embraced the enthusiasm of the Christians<sup>62</sup>.

Trials of  
the Christians.

III. Punishment was not the inevitable consequence of conviction, and the Christians, whose guilt was the most clearly proved by the testimony of witnesses, or even by their voluntary confession, still retained in their own power the alternative of life or death. It was not so much the past offence, as the actual resistance, which excited the indignation of the magistrate. He was persuaded that he offered them an easy pardon, since if they consented to cast a few grains of incense upon the altar, they were dismissed from the tribunal in safety and with applause.

<sup>61</sup> See Tertullian (*Apolog.* c. 40.). The acts of the martyrdom of Polycarp exhibit a lively picture of these tumults, which were usually fomented by the malice of the Jews.

<sup>62</sup> These regulations are inserted in the above-mentioned edicts of Hadrian and Pius. See the apology of Melito (*apud Euseb.* l. iv. c. 26.).

It

It was esteemed the duty of a humane judge to endeavour to reclaim, rather than to punish, those deluded enthusiasts. Varying his tone according to the age, the sex, or the situation of the prisoners, he frequently condescended to set before their eyes every circumstance which could render life more pleasing, or death more terrible; and to solicit, nay to intreat, them, that they would shew some compassion to themselves, to their families, and to their friends<sup>63</sup>. If threats and persuasions proved ineffectual, he had often recourse to violence; the scourge and the rack were called in to supply the deficiency of argument, and every art of cruelty was employed to subdue such inflexible, and, as it appeared to the Pagans, such criminal, obstinacy. The ancient apologists of Christianity have censured, with equal truth and severity, the irregular conduct of their persecutors, who, contrary to every principle of judicial proceeding, admitted the use of torture, in order to obtain, not a confession, but a denial, of the crime which was the object of their inquiry<sup>64</sup>. The monks of succeeding ages, who, in their peaceful solitudes, entertained themselves with diversifying the deaths and sufferings of the primitive martyrs, have frequently invented torments of a much more refined and ingenious nature. In particu-

<sup>63</sup> See the rescript of Trajan, and the conduct of Pliny. The most authentic acts of the martyrs abound in these exhortations.

<sup>64</sup> In particular, see Tertullian (Apolog. c. 2, 3.), and Lactantius (Institut. Divin. v. 9.). Their reasonings are almost the same; but we may discover, that one of these apologists had been a lawyer, and the other a rhetorician.

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lar, it has pleased them to suppose, that the zeal of the Roman magistrates, disdaining every consideration of moral virtue or public decency, endeavoured to seduce those whom they were unable to vanquish, and that by their orders the most brutal violence was offered to those whom they found it impossible to seduce. It is related, that pious females, who were prepared to despise death, were sometimes condemned to a more severe trial, and called upon to determine whether they set a higher value on their religion or on their chastity. The youths to whose licentious embraces they were abandoned, received a solemn exhortation from the judge, to exert their most strenuous efforts to maintain the honour of Venus against the impious virgin who refused to burn incense on her altars. Their violence however was commonly disappointed, and the seasonable interposition of some miraculous power preserved the chaste spouses of Christ from the dishonour even of an involuntary defeat. We should not indeed neglect to remark, that the more ancient as well as authentic memorials of the church are seldom polluted with these extravagant and indecent fictions<sup>65</sup>.

Humanity  
of the Ro-  
man ma-  
gistrates,

The total disregard of truth and probability in the representation of these primitive martyrdoms

<sup>65</sup> See two instances of this kind of torture in the *Acta Sincera Martyrum*, published by Ruinart, p. 160. 399. Jerome, in his *Legend of Paul the Hermit*, tells a strange story of a young man, who was chained naked on a bed of flowers, and assaulted by a beautiful and wanton courtesan. He quelled the rising temptation by biting off his tongue.

was

was occasioned by a very natural mistake. The ecclesiastical writers of the fourth or fifth centuries ascribed to the magistrates of Rome the same degree of implacable and unrelenting zeal which filled their own breasts against the heretics or the idolaters of their own times. It is not improbable that some of those persons who were raised to the dignities of the empire, might have imbibed the prejudices of the populace, and that the cruel disposition of others might occasionally be stimulated by motives of avarice or of personal resentment<sup>66</sup>. But it is certain, and we may appeal to the grateful confessions of the first Christians, that the greatest part of those magistrates who exercised in the provinces the authority of the emperor, or of the senate, and to whose hands alone the jurisdiction of life and death was intrusted, behaved like men of polished manners and liberal educations, who respected the rules of justice, and who were conversant with the precepts of philosophy. They frequently declined the odious task of persecution, dismissed the charge with contempt, or suggested to the accused Christian some legal evasion, by which he might elude the severity of the laws<sup>67</sup>. Whenever they were invested with a discretionary

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<sup>66</sup> The conversion of his wife provoked Claudius Herminianus, governor of Cappadocia, to treat the Christians with uncommon severity. Tertullian ad Scapulam, c. 3.

<sup>67</sup> Tertullian, in his epistle to the governor of Africa, mentions several remarkable instances of lenity and forbearance, which had happened within his knowledge.

power,

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siderable  
number of  
martyrs.

power<sup>68</sup>, they used it much less for the oppression, than for the relief and benefit of the afflicted church. They were far from condemning all the Christians who were accused before their tribunal, and very far from punishing with death all those who were convicted of an obstinate adherence to the new superstition. Contenting themselves, for the most part, with the milder chastisements of imprisonment, exile, or slavery in the mines<sup>69</sup>, they left the unhappy victims of their justice some reason to hope, that a prosperous event, the accession, the marriage, or the triumph of an emperor, might speedily restore them by a general pardon to their former state. The martyrs, devoted to immediate execution by the Roman magistrates, appear to have been selected from the most opposite extremes. They were either bishops and presbyters, the persons the most distinguished among the Christians by their rank and influence, and whose example might strike terror into the whole sect<sup>70</sup>; or else they were

<sup>68</sup> Neque enim in universum aliquid quod quasi certam formam habeat, constitui potest: an expression of Trajan, which gave a very great latitude to the governors of provinces.

<sup>69</sup> In Metalla damnamur, in insulas relegemur. Tertullian. *Apolog.* c. 12. The mines of Numidia contained nine bishops, with a proportionable number of their clergy and people, to whom Cyprian addressed a pious epistle of praise and comfort. See Cyprian. *Epistol.* 76, 77.

<sup>70</sup> Though we cannot receive with entire confidence, either the epistle, or the acts, of Ignatius (they may be found in the 2d volume of the Apostolic Fathers), yet we may quote that bishop of Antioch as one of these *exemplary* martyrs. He was sent in chains to Rome as a public spectacle; and when he arrived at Troas, he received the pleasing intelligence, that the persecution of Antioch was already at an end.

the

the meanest and most abject among them, particularly those of the servile condition whose lives were esteemed of little value, and whose sufferings were viewed by the ancients with too careless an indifference<sup>71</sup>. The learned Origen, who, from his experience as well as reading, was intimately acquainted with the history of the Christians, declares, in the most express terms, that the number of martyrs was very inconsiderable<sup>72</sup>. His authority would alone be sufficient to annihilate that formidable army of martyrs, whose relics, drawn for the most part from the catacombs of Rome, have replenished so many churches<sup>73</sup>, and whose marvellous achievements

<sup>71</sup> Among the martyrs of Lyons (Euseb. l. v. c. 1.) the slave Blandina was distinguished by more exquisite tortures. Of the five martyrs so much celebrated in the acts of Felicitas and Perpetua, two were of a servile, and two others of a very mean, condition.

<sup>72</sup> Origen. advers. Celsum, l. iii p. 116. His words deserve to be transcribed. "Ολγοι κατα κριους, και σφοδρα ευαριθυμτοι περι των Χριστιανων θροισθιας τεθνηκασι."

<sup>73</sup> If we recollect that all the Plebeians of Rome were not Christians, and that all the Christians were not saints and martyrs, we may judge with how much safety religious honours can be ascribed to bones or urns, indiscriminately taken from the public burial-place. After ten centuries of a very free and open trade, some suspicions have arisen among the more learned catholics. They now require, as a proof of sanctity and martyrdom, the letters B. M., a vial full of red liquor, supposed to be blood, or the figure of a palm tree. But the two former signs are of little weight, and with regard to the last, it is observed by the critics, 1. That the figure, as it is called, of a palm, is perhaps a cypress, and perhaps only a stop, the flourish of a comma, used in the monumental inscriptions. 2. That the palm was the symbol of victory among the Pagans. 3. That among the Christians it served as the emblem, not only of martyrdom, but in general of a joyful resurrection. See the epistle of P. Mabillon, on the worship of unknown saints, and Muratori sopra le Antichità Italiane, Dissertat. lviii.

have

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have been the subject of so many volumes of Holy Romance<sup>74</sup>. But the general assertion of Origen may be explained and confirmed by the particular testimony of his friend Dionysius, who, in the immense city of Alexandria, and under the rigorous persecution of Decius, reckons only ten men and seven women who suffered for the profession of the Christian name<sup>75</sup>.

Example  
of Cyprian  
bishop of  
Carthage.

During the same period of persecution, the zealous, the eloquent, the ambitious Cyprian governed the church, not only of Carthage, but even of Africa. He possessed every quality which could engage the reverence of the faithful, or provoke the suspicions and resentment of the Pagan magistrates. His character as well as his station seemed to mark out that holy prelate as the most distinguished object of envy and of danger<sup>76</sup>. The experience, however, of the life of Cyprian, is sufficient to prove, that our fancy has exaggerated the perilous situation of a Christian bishop; and that the dangers to which he was

<sup>74</sup> As a specimen of these legends, we may be satisfied with 10,000 Christian soldiers crucified in one day, either by Trajan or Hadrian, on mount Ararat. See Baronius ad Martyrologium Romanum. Tillemont, Mem. Ecclesiast. tom. ii. part ii. p. 438. and Geddes's Miscellanies, vol. ii. p. 203. The abbreviation of MIL. which may signify either *soldiers* or *thousands*, is said to have occasioned some extraordinary mistakes.

<sup>75</sup> Dionysius ap. Euseb. l. vi. c. 41. One of the seventeen was likewise accused of robbery.

<sup>76</sup> The letters of Cyprian exhibit a very curious and original picture, both of the *man* and of the *times*. See likewise the two lives of Cyprian, composed with equal accuracy, though with very different views; the one by Le Clerc (Bibliothèque Universelle, tom. xii. p. 202—378.), the other by Tillemont, Mémoires Ecclesiastiques, tom. iv. part i. p. 76—459.

exposed

exposed were less imminent than those which temporal ambition is always prepared to encounter in the pursuit of honours. Four Roman emperors, with their families, their favourites, and their adherents, perished by the sword in the space of ten years, during which the bishop of Carthage guided by his authority and eloquence the counsels of the African church. It was only in the third year of his administration, that he had reason, during a few months, to apprehend the severe edicts of Decius, the vigilance of the magistrate, and the clamours of the multitude, who loudly demanded, that Cyprian, the leader of the Christians, should be thrown to the lions. Prudence suggested the necessity of a temporary retreat, and the voice of prudence was obeyed. He withdrew himself into an obscure solitude, from whence he could maintain a constant correspondence with the clergy and people of Carthage; and concealing himself till the tempest was past, he preserved his life, without relinquishing either his power or his reputation. His extreme caution did not however escape the censure of the more rigid Christians who lamented, or the reproaches of his personal enemies who insulted, a conduct which they considered as a pusillanimous and criminal desertion of the most sacred duty". The propriety of reserving himself for the future exigencies of the church, the

His danger  
and flight.

77 See the polite but severe epistle of the clergy of Rome to the bishop of Carthage (Cyprian, Epist. 3, 9.). Pontius labours with the greatest care and diligence to justify his master against the general censure.

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example of several holy bishops<sup>78</sup>, and the divine admonitions which, as he declares himself, he frequently received in visions and ecstasies, were the reasons alleged in his justification<sup>79</sup>. But his best apology may be found in the cheerful resolution, with which, about eight years afterwards, he suffered death in the cause of religion. The authentic history of his martyrdom has been recorded with unusual candour and impartiality. A short abstract therefore of its most important circumstances will convey the clearest information of the spirit, and of the forms, of the Roman persecutions<sup>80</sup>.

A. D. 257.  
His banishment.

When Valerian was consul for the third, and Gallienus for the fourth, time; Paternus, proconsul of Africa, summoned Cyprian to appear in his private council-chamber. He there acquainted him with the Imperial mandate which he had just received<sup>81</sup>, that those who had abandoned the Roman religion, should immediately return to the practice of the ceremonies of their

<sup>78</sup> In particular those of Dionysius of Alexandria, and Gregory Thaumaturgus, of Nero-Cæsarea. See Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. vi. c. 40. and Memoires de Tillemont, tom. iv. part ii. p. 685.

<sup>79</sup> See Cyprian, Epist. 16. and his life by Pontius.

<sup>80</sup> We have an original life of Cyprian by the deacon Pontius, the companion of his exile, and the spectator of his death; and we likewise possess the ancient proconsular acts of his martyrdom. These two relations are consistent with each other, and with probability; and what is somewhat remarkable, they are both unsullied by any miraculous circumstances.

<sup>81</sup> It should seem that these were circular orders, sent at the same time to all the governors. Dionysius (ap. Euseb. l. vii. c. 11.) relates the history of his own banishment from Alexandria, almost in the same manner. But as he escaped and survived the persecution, we must account him either more or less fortunate than Cyprian.

ancestors. Cyprian replied without hesitation, that he was a Christian and a bishop, devoted to the worship of the true and only Deity, to whom he offered up his daily supplications for the safety and prosperity of the two emperors, his lawful sovereigns. With modest confidence he pleaded the privilege of a citizen, in refusing to give any answer to some invidious and indeed illegal questions which the proconsul had proposed. A sentence of banishment was pronounced as the penalty of Cyprian's disobedience; and he was conducted without delay to Curubis, a free and maritime city of Zeugitania, in a pleasant situation, a fertile territory, and at the distance of about forty miles from Carthage<sup>82</sup>. The exiled bishop enjoyed the conveniencies of life and the consciousness of virtue. His reputation was diffused over Africa and Italy; an account of his behaviour was published for the edification of the Christian world<sup>83</sup>; and his solitude was frequently interrupted by the letters, the visits, and the congratulations of the faithful. On the arrival of a new proconsul in the province, the fortune of Cyprian appeared for some time to wear a still

<sup>82</sup> See *Plin. Hist. Natur. v. 3.* Cellarius, *Geograph. Antiq.* part iii. p. 96. Shaw's *Travels*, p. 90.; and for the adjacent country (which is terminated by Cape Bona, or the promontory of Mercury), *l'Afrique de Marmol. tom. ii. p. 494.* There are the remains of an aqueduct, near Curubis, or Curbis, at present altered into *Gurbes*; and Dr. Shaw read an inscription, which styles that city *Colonia Fulvia*. The deacon Pontius (in *Vit. Cyprian. c. 12.*) calls it "Apricum et competentem locum, hospitium pro voluntate secretum, et quicquid apponi eis ante promissum est, qui regnum et justitiam Dei quaerunt."

<sup>83</sup> See *Cyprian. Epistol. 77.* Edit. Fell.

more



His con-  
demna-  
tion.

more favourable aspect. He was recalled from banishment; and though not yet permitted to return to Carthage, his own gardens in the neighbourhood of the capital were assigned for the place of his residence<sup>84</sup>.

At length, exactly one year<sup>85</sup> after Cyprian was first apprehended, Galerius Maximus, proconsul of Africa, received the Imperial warrant for the execution of the Christian teachers. The bishop of Carthage was sensible that he should be singled out for one of the first victims; and the frailty of nature tempted him to withdraw himself by a secret flight, from the danger and the honour of martyrdom: but soon recovering that fortitude which his character required, he returned to his gardens, and patiently expected the ministers of death. Two officers of rank, who were intrusted with that commission, placed Cyprian between them in a chariot; and as the proconsul was not then at leisure, they conducted him, not to a prison, but to a private house in Carthage, which belonged to one of them. An elegant supper was provided for the entertainment of the bishop, and his Christian friends were permitted for the last time to enjoy his society, whilst the streets were filled with a multitude of the faithful,

<sup>84</sup> Upon his conversion, he had sold those gardens for the benefit of the poor. The indulgence of God (most probably the liberality of some Christian friend) restored them to Cyprian. See Pontius, c. 15.

<sup>85</sup> When Cyprian, a twelvemonth before, was sent into exile, he dreamt that he should be put to death the next day. The event made it necessary to explain that word, as signifying a year. Pontius, c. 12.

anxious

anxious and alarmed at the approaching fate of their spiritual father<sup>86</sup>. In the morning he appeared before the tribunal of the proconsul, who, after informing himself of the name and situation of Cyprian, commanded him to offer sacrifice, and pressed him to reflect on the consequences of his disobedience. The refusal of Cyprian was firm and decisive; and the magistrate, when he had taken the opinion of his council, pronounced with some reluctance the sentence of death. It was conceived in the following terms: "That Thascius Cyprianus should be immediately beheaded, as the enemy of the gods of Rome, and as the chief and ringleader of a criminal association, which he had seduced into an impious resistance against the laws of the most holy emperors, Valerian and Gallienus<sup>87</sup>." The manner of his execution was the mildest and least painful that could be inflicted on a person convicted of any capital offence: nor was the use of torture admitted to obtain from the bishop of Carthage either the recantation of his principles, or the discovery of his accomplices.

As soon as the sentence was proclaimed, a general cry of "We will die with him," arose at once among the listening multitude of Christians who waited before the palace gates. The gene

His martyrdom.

<sup>86</sup> Pontius (c. 15.) acknowledges that Cyprian, with whom he supped, passed the night *custodiâ delicatâ*. The bishop exercised a last and very proper act of jurisdiction, by directing that the younger females, who watched in the street, should be removed from the dangers and temptations of a nocturnal crowd. Aët. Proconsularia, c. 2.

<sup>87</sup> See the original sentence in the Acts, c. 4. and in Pontius, c. 17. The latter expresses it in a more rhetorical manner.

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rous effusions of their zeal and affection were neither serviceable to Cyprian nor dangerous to themselves. He was led away under a guard of tribunes and centurions, without resistance and without insult, to the place of his execution, a spacious and level plain near the city, which was already filled with great numbers of spectators. His faithful presbyters and deacons were permitted to accompany their holy bishop. They assisted him in laying aside his upper garment, spread linen on the ground to catch the precious relics of his blood, and received his orders to bestow five-and-twenty pieces of gold on the executioner. The martyr then covered his face with his hands, and at one blow his head was separated from his body. His corpse remained during some hours exposed to the curiosity of the Gentiles: but in the night it was removed, and transported in a triumphal procession, and with a splendid illumination, to the burial-place of the Christians. The funeral of Cyprian was publicly celebrated without receiving any interruption from the Roman magistrates; and those among the faithful, who had performed the last offices to his person and his memory, were secure from the danger of inquiry or of punishment. It is remarkable, that of so great a multitude of bishops in the province of Africa, Cyprian was the first who was esteemed worthy to obtain the crown of martyrdom<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> Pontius, c. 29. M. de Tillemont (*Memoires*, tom. iv. part i. p. 450. note 50.) is not pleased with so positive an exclusion of any former martyrs of the episcopal rank.

It

It was in the choice of Cyprian, either to die a martyr, or to live an apostate: but on that choice depended the alternative of honour or infamy. Could we suppose that the bishop of Carthage had employed the profession of the Christian, faith only as the instrument of his avarice or ambition, it was still incumbent on him to support the character which he had assumed<sup>89</sup>; and, if he possessed the smallest degree of manly fortitude, rather to expose himself to the most cruel tortures, than by a single act to exchange the reputation of a whole life, for the abhorrence of his Christian brethren, and the contempt of the Gentile world. But if the zeal of Cyprian was supported by the sincere conviction of the truth of those doctrines which he preached, the crown of martyrdom must have appeared to him as an object of desire rather than of terror. It is not easy to extract any distinct ideas from the vague though eloquent declamations of the Fathers, or to ascertain the degree of immortal glory and happiness which they confidently promised to those who were so fortunate as to shed their blood in the cause of religion<sup>90</sup>. They inculcated with becoming diligence, that

<sup>89</sup> Whatever opinion we may entertain of the character or principles of Thomas Becket, we must acknowledge that he suffered death with a constancy not unworthy of the primitive martyrs. See Lord Lyttelton's History of Henry II. vol. ii. p. 592, &c.

<sup>90</sup> See in particular the treatise of Cyprian de Lapsis, p. 87—98. Edit. Fell. The learning of Dodwell (Dissertat. Cyprianicæ, xii, xiii.), and the ingenuity of Middleton (Free Inquiry, p. 162, &c.), have left scarcely any thing to add concerning the merit, the honours, and the motives of the martyrs.

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the fire of martyrdom supplied every defect and expiated every sin; that while the souls of ordinary Christians were obliged to pass through a slow and painful purification, the triumphant sufferers entered into the immediate fruition of eternal bliss, where, in the society of the patriarchs, the apostles, and the prophets, they reigned with Christ, and acted as his assessors in the universal judgment of mankind. The assurance of a lasting reputation upon earth, a motive so congenial to the vanity of human nature, often served to animate the courage of the martyrs. The honours which Rome or Athens bestowed on those citizens who had fallen in the cause of their country, were cold and unmeaning demonstrations of respect, when compared with the ardent gratitude and devotion which the primitive church expressed towards the victorious champions of the faith. The annual commemoration of their virtues and sufferings was observed as a sacred ceremony, and at length terminated in religious worship. Among the Christians who had publicly confessed their religious principles, those, who (as it very frequently happened) had been dismissed from the tribunal or the prisons of the Pagan magistrates, obtained such honours as were justly due to their imperfect martyrdom, and their generous resolution. The most pious females courted the permission of imprinting kisses on the fetters which they had worn, and on the wounds which they had received. Their persons were esteemed holy, their decisions were  
3. admitted

admitted with deference, and they too often abused, by their spiritual pride and licentious manners, the pre-eminence which their zeal and intrepidity had acquired". Distinctions like these, whilst they display the exalted merit, betray the inconsiderable number of those who suffered, and of those who died for the profession of Christianity.

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The sober discretion of the present age will more readily censure than admire, but can more easily admire than imitate, the fervour of the first Christians, who, according to the lively expression of Sulpicius Severus, desired martyrdom with more eagerness than his own contemporaries solicited a bishopric". The epistles which Ignatius composed as he was carried in chains through the cities of Asia, breathe sentiments the most repugnant to the ordinary feelings of human nature. He earnestly beseeches the Romans, that when he should be exposed in the amphitheatre, they would not, by their kind but unseasonable intercession, deprive him of the crown of glory; and he declares his resolution to provoke and irritate the wild beasts which might be employed as the instruments of his

Arduour of  
the first  
Christians.

\* Cyprian. Epistol. 3, 6, 7. 22. 24. and de Unitat. Ecclesiæ. The number of pretended martyrs has been very much multiplied, by the custom which was introduced of bestowing that honourable name on confessors.

† Certatim gloriosa in certamina ruebatur; multique avidius tum martyria gloriosis mortibus quærebantur, quam nunc Episcopatus pravis ambitionibus appetuntur. Sulpicius Severus, l. ii. He might have omitted the word *nunc*.

F f 3

death.

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death<sup>93</sup>. Some stories are related of the courage of martyrs, who actually performed what Ignatius had intended; who exasperated the fury of the lions, pressed the executioner to hasten his office, cheerfully leaped into the fires which were kindled to consume them, and discovered a sensation of joy and pleasure in the midst of the most exquisite tortures. Several examples have been preserved of a zeal impatient of those restraints which the emperors had provided for the security of the church. The Christians sometimes supplied by their voluntary declaration the want of an accuser, rudely disturbed the public service of paganism<sup>94</sup>, and rushing in crowds round the tribunal of the magistrates, called upon them to pronounce and to inflict the sentence of the law. The behaviour of the Christians was too remarkable to escape the notice of the ancient philosophers; but they seem to have considered it with much less admiration than astonishment. Incapable of conceiving the motives which sometimes transported the fortitude of believers beyond the bounds of prudence or reason, they treated such an eagerness to die as

<sup>93</sup> See *Epist. ad Roman.* c. 4, 5. *ap. Patres Apostol.* tom. ii. p. 27. It suited the purpose of Bishop Pearson (see *Vindiciæ Ignatianæ*, part ii. c. 9.) to justify, by a profusion of examples and authorities, the sentiments of Ignatius.

<sup>94</sup> The story of Polyeuctes, on which Corneille has founded a very beautiful tragedy, is one of the most celebrated, though not perhaps the most authentic, instances of this excessive zeal. We should observe, that the 60th canon of the council of Illiberis refuses the title of martyrs to those who exposed themselves to death, by publicly destroying the idols.

the

the strange result of obstinate despair, of stupid insensibility, or of superstitious phrenzy". "Unhappy men!" exclaimed the proconsul Antoninus to the Christians of Asia; "unhappy men! if you are thus weary of your lives, is it so difficult for you to find ropes and precipices?" He was extremely cautious (as it is observed by a learned and pious historian) of punishing men who had found no accusers but themselves, the Imperial laws not having made any provision for so unexpected a case: condemning therefore a few, as a warning to their brethren, he dismissed the multitude with indignation and contempt". Notwithstanding this real or affected disdain, the intrepid constancy of the faithful was productive of more salutary effects on those minds which nature or grace had disposed for the easy reception of religious truth. On these melancholy occasions, there were many among the Gentiles who pitied, who admired, and who were converted. The generous enthusiasm was communicated from the sufferer to the spectators; and the blood of martyrs, according to a well-known observation, became the seed of the church.

<sup>95</sup> See Epictetus, l. iv. c. 7. (though there is some doubt whether he alludes to the Christians), Marcus Antoninus de Rebus suis, l. xi. c. 3. Lucian in Peregrin.

<sup>96</sup> Tertullian ad Scapul. c. 5. The learned are divided between three persons of the same name, who were all proconsuls of Asia. I am inclined to ascribe this story to Antoninus Pius, who was afterwards emperor; and who may have governed Asia, under the reign of Trajan.

<sup>97</sup> Mosheim, de Rebus Christ. ante Constantin. p. 235.

But although devotion had raised, and eloquence continued to inflame, this fever of the mind, it insensibly gave way to the more natural hopes and fears of the human heart, to the love of life, the apprehension of pain, and the horror of dissolution. The more prudent rulers of the church found themselves obliged to restrain the indiscreet ardour of their followers, and to distrust a constancy which too often abandoned them in the hour of trial<sup>98</sup>. As the lives of the faithful became less mortified and austere, they were every day less ambitious of the honours of martyrdom; and the soldiers of Christ, instead of distinguishing themselves by voluntary deeds of heroism, frequently deserted their post, and fled in confusion before the enemy whom it was their duty to resist. There were three methods, however, of escaping the flames of persecution, which were not attended with an equal degree of guilt: the first indeed was generally allowed to be innocent; the second was of a doubtful, or at least of a venial, nature; but the third implied a direct and criminal apostacy from the Christian faith.

Three methods of escaping martyrdom.

I. A modern inquisitor would hear with surprise, that whenever an information was given to a Roman magistrate, of any person within his jurisdiction who had embraced the sect of the Christians, the charge was communicated to the party accused, and that a convenient time was

<sup>98</sup> See the Epistle of the Church of Smyrna, ap. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. iv. c. 15.

allowed

allowed him to settle his domestic concerns, and to prepare an answer to the crime which was imputed to him<sup>99</sup>. If he entertained any doubt of his own constancy, such a delay afforded him the opportunity of preserving his life and honour by flight, of withdrawing himself into some obscure retirement or some distant province, and of patiently expecting the return of peace and security. A measure so consonant to reason was soon authorized by the advice and example of the most holy prelates; and seems to have been censured by few, except by the Montanists, who deviated into heresy by their strict and obstinate adherence to the rigour of ancient discipline<sup>100</sup>.

II. The provincial governors, whose zeal was less prevalent than their avarice, had countenanced the practice of selling certificates, (or libels as they were called,) which attested, that the persons therein mentioned had complied with the laws, and sacrificed to the Roman deities. By producing these false declarations, the opulent and timid Christians were enabled to silence the malice of an informer, and to reconcile in

<sup>99</sup> In the second apology of Justin, there is a particular and very curious instance of this legal delay. The same indulgence was granted to accused Christians, in the persecution of Decius; and Cyprian (*de Lapsis*) expressly mentions the "*Dies negantibus præstitutus*."

<sup>100</sup> Tertullian considers flight from persecution as an imperfect, but very criminal, apostacy, as an impious attempt to elude the will of God, &c. &c. He has written a treatise on this subject (see p. 536—544. Edit. Rigalt.), which is filled with the wildest fanaticism, and the most incoherent declamation. It is, however, somewhat remarkable, that Tertullian did not suffer martyrdom himself.

some

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some measure their safety with their religion. A slight penance atoned for this profane dissimulation<sup>101</sup>. III. In every persecution there were great numbers of unworthy Christians, who publicly disowned or renounced the faith which they had professed; and who confirmed the sincerity of their abjuration, by the legal acts of burning incense or of offering sacrifices. Some of these apostates had yielded on the first menace or exhortation of the magistrate; whilst the patience of others had been subdued by the length and repetition of tortures. The affrighted countenances of some betrayed their inward remorse, while others advanced with confidence and alacrity to the altars of the gods<sup>102</sup>. But the disguise, which fear had imposed, subsisted no longer than the present danger. As soon as the severity of the persecution was abated, the doors of the churches were assailed by the returning multitude of penitents, who detested their idolatrous submission, and who solicited with equal ardour, but with various success, their readmission into the society of Christians<sup>103</sup>.

#### IV. Not-

<sup>101</sup> The *Libellatici*, who are chiefly known by the writings of Cyprian, are described with the utmost precision, in the copious commentary of Mosheim, p. 483—489.

<sup>102</sup> Plin. *Epistol.* x. 97. Dionysius Alexandrin. ap. Euseb. l. vi. c. 41. *Ad prima statim verba minantis inimici maximus fratrū numerus fidem suam prodidit: nec prostratus est persecutionis impetu, sed voluntario lapsu seipsum prostravit.* Cyprian. *Opera*, p. 89. Among these deserters were many priests, and even bishops.

<sup>103</sup> It was on this occasion that Cyprian wrote his treatise *De lapsis*, and many of his epistles. The controversy concerning the treatment

IV. Notwithstanding the general rules established for the conviction and punishment of the Christians, the fate of those sectaries, in an extensive and arbitrary government, must still, in a great measure, have depended on their own behaviour, the circumstances of the times, and the temper of their supreme as well as subordinate rulers. Zeal might sometimes provoke, and prudence might sometimes avert or assuage, the superstitious fury of the Pagans. A variety of motives might dispose the provincial governors either to enforce or to relax the execution of the laws; and of these motives, the most forcible was their regard not only for the public edicts, but for the secret intentions of the emperor, a glance from whose eye was sufficient to kindle or to extinguish the flames of persecution. As often as any occasional severities were exercised in the different parts of the empire, the primitive Christians lamented and perhaps magnified their own sufferings; but the celebrated number of *ten* persecutions has been determined by the ecclesiastical writers of the fifth century, who possessed a more distinct view of the prosperous or adverse fortunes of the church, from the age of Nero to that of Diocletian. The ingenious parallels of the *ten* plagues of Egypt, and of the *ten* horns of the Apocalypse first

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Alternatives of severity and toleration.

The ten persecutions.

ment of penitent apostates, does not occur among the Christians of the preceding century. Shall we ascribe this to the superiority of their faith and courage, or to our less intimate knowledge of their history?

suggested

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suggested this calculation to their minds; and in their application of the faith of prophecy to the truth of history, they were careful to select those reigns which were indeed the most hostile to the Christian cause<sup>104</sup>. But these transient persecutions served only to revive the zeal, and to restore the discipline of the faithful: and the moments of extraordinary rigour were compensated by much longer intervals of peace and security. The indifference of some princes, and the indulgence of others, permitted the Christians to enjoy, though not perhaps a legal, yet an actual and public, toleration of their religion.

Supposed  
edicts of  
Tiberius  
and Mar-  
cus Anto-  
ninus.

The apology of Tertullian contains two very ancient, very singular, but at the same time very suspicious instances of Imperial clemency; the edicts published by Tiberius and by Marcus Antoninus, and designed not only to protect the innocence of the Christians, but even to proclaim those stupendous miracles which had attested the truth of their doctrine. The first of these examples is attended with some difficulties which might perplex the sceptical mind<sup>105</sup>. We are required to believe, *that* Pontius Pilate in-

<sup>104</sup> See Mosheim, p. 97. Sulpicius Severus was the first author of this computation; though he seemed desirous of reserving the tenth and greatest persecution for the coming of the Antichrist.

<sup>105</sup> The testimony given by Pontius Pilate is first mentioned by Justin. The successive improvements which the story has acquired (as it passed through the hands of Tertullian, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, Orosius, Gregory of Tours, and the authors of the several editions of the acts of Pilate), are very fairly stated by Dom. Calmet, *Dissertat. sur l'Ecriture*, tom. iii. p. 631, &c.

formed

formed the emperor of the unjust sentence of death which he had pronounced against an innocent, and, as it appeared, a divine, person; and that, without acquiring the merit, he exposed himself to the danger, of martyrdom; *that* Tiberius, who avowed his contempt for all religion, immediately conceived the design of placing the Jewish Messiah among the gods of Rome; *that* his servile senate ventured to disobey the commands of their master; *that* Tiberius, instead of resenting their refusal, contented himself with protecting the Christians from the severity of the laws, many years before such laws were enacted, or before the church had assumed any distinct name or existence; and lastly, *that* the memory of this extraordinary transaction was preserved in the most public and authentic records, which escaped the knowledge of the historians of Greece and Rome, and were only visible to the eyes of an African Christian, who composed his apology one hundred and sixty years after the death of Tiberius. The edict of Marcus Antoninus is supposed to have been the effect of his devotion and gratitude, for the miraculous deliverance which he had obtained in the Marcomannic war. The distress of the legions, the seasonable tempest of rain and hail, of thunder and of lightning, and the dismay and defeat of the barbarians, have been celebrated by the eloquence of several Pagan writers. If there were any Christians in that army, it was natural that they should ascribe some merit to the

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the fervent prayers, which, in the moment of danger, they had offered up for their own and the public safety. But we are still assured by monuments of brass and marble, by the Imperial medals, and by the Antonine column, that neither the prince nor the people entertained any sense of this signal obligation, since they unanimously attribute their deliverance to the providence of Jupiter, and to the interposition of Mercury. During the whole course of his reign, Marcus despised the Christians as a philosopher, and punished them as a sovereign <sup>106</sup>.

State of  
the Christians in the  
reigns of  
Commodus  
and  
Severus.  
A.D. 180.

By a singular fatality, the hardships which they had endured under the government of a virtuous prince, immediately ceased on the accession of a tyrant, and as none except themselves had experienced the injustice of Marcus, so they alone were protected by the lenity of Commodus. The celebrated Marcia, the most favoured of his concubines, and who at length contrived the murder of her Imperial lover, entertained a singular affection for the oppressed church; and though it was impossible that she could reconcile the practice of vice with the precepts of the Gospel, she might hope to atone for the frailties of her sex and profession, by declaring herself the patroness of the Christians <sup>107</sup>.

<sup>106</sup> On this miracle, as it is commonly called, of the thundering legion, see the admirable criticism of Mr. Moyle, in his Works, vol. ii. p. 81—390.

<sup>107</sup> Dion Cassius, or rather his abbreviator Xiphilin, l. lxxii. p. 1206. Mr. Moyle (p. 266.) has explained the condition of the church under the reign of Commodus.

Under

Under the gracious protection of Marcia, they passed in safety the thirteen years of a cruel tyranny; and when the empire was established in the house of Severus, they formed a domestic but more honourable connexion with the new court. The emperor was persuaded, that, in a dangerous sickness, he had derived some benefit, either spiritual or physical, from the holy oil, with which one of his slaves had anointed him. He always treated with peculiar distinction several persons of both sexes who had embraced the new religion. The nurse as well as the preceptor of Caracalla were Christians; and if that young prince ever betrayed a sentiment of humanity, it was occasioned by an incident, which, however trifling, bore some relation to the cause of Christianity<sup>108</sup>. Under the reign of Severus, the fury of the populace was checked; the rigour of ancient laws was for some time suspended; and the provincial governors were satisfied with receiving an annual present from the churches within their jurisdiction, as the price, or as the reward, of their moderation<sup>109</sup>. The controversy concerning the precise time of the celebration of Easter armed the bishops of Asia and

<sup>108</sup> Compare the life of Caracalla in the Augustan History, with the epistle of Tertullian to Scapula. Dr. Jortin (Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 5, &c.) considers the cure of Severus, by the means of holy oil, with a strong desire to convert it into a miracle.

<sup>109</sup> Tertullian de Fugâ, c. 13. The present was made during the feast of the Saturnalia; and it is a matter of serious concern to Tertullian, that the faithful should be confounded with the most infamous professions which purchased the connivance of the government.

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A. D. 198.

Italy against each other, and was considered as the most important business of this period of leisure and tranquillity<sup>110</sup>. Nor was the peace of the church interrupted, till the increasing numbers of profelytes seem at length to have attracted the attention, and to have alienated the mind, of Severus. With the design of restraining the progress of Christianity, he published an edict, which, though it was designed to affect only the new converts, could not be carried into strict execution, without exposing to danger and punishment the most zealous of their teachers and missionaries. In this mitigated persecution, we may still discover the indulgent spirit of Rome and of Polytheism, which so readily admitted every excuse in favour of those who practised the religious ceremonies of their fathers<sup>111</sup>.

Of the suc-  
cessors of  
Severus.

A. D.  
211—249.

But the laws which Severus had enacted, soon expired with the authority of that emperor; and the Christians, after this accidental tempest, enjoyed a calm of thirty-eight years<sup>112</sup>. Till this period they had usually held their assemblies in private houses and sequestered places. They were now permitted to erect and consecrate convenient edifices for the purpose of religious worship<sup>113</sup>; to purchase lands, even at Rome itself, for

<sup>110</sup> Euseb. l. v. c. 23, 24. Mosheim, p. 435—447.

<sup>111</sup> *Judeos fieri sub gravi poena vetuit. Idem eum de Christianis sanxit.* Hist. August. p. 70.

<sup>112</sup> Sulpicius Severus, l. ii. p. 384. This computation (allowing for a single exception) is confirmed by the history of Eusebius, and by the writings of Cyprian.

<sup>113</sup> The antiquity of Christian churches is discussed by Tillemont, (*Memoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. iii. part ii. p. 68—72.), and by Ma.

for the use of the community; and to conduct the elections of their ecclesiastical ministers in so public, but at the same time in so exemplary a manner, as to deserve the respectful attention of the Gentiles<sup>114</sup>. This long repose of the church was accompanied with dignity. The reigns of those princes who derived their extraction from the Asiatic provinces, proved the most favourable to the Christians; the eminent persons of the sect, instead of being reduced to implore the protection of a slave or concubine, were admitted into the palace in the honourable characters of priests and philosophers; and their mysterious doctrines, which were already diffused among the people, insensibly attracted the curiosity of their sovereign. When the empress *Mammæa* passed through Antioch, she expressed a desire of conversing with the celebrated *Origen*, the fame of whose piety and learning was spread over the East. *Origen* obeyed so flattering an invitation, and though he could not expect to succeed in the conversion of an artful and ambitious woman, she listened with pleasure to his eloquent exhortations, and honourably dismissed him to his

Mr. Moyle (vol. i. p. 378—398.). The former refers the first construction of them to the peace of Alexander Severus; the latter, to the peace of Gallienus.

<sup>114</sup> See the Augustan History, p. 130. The emperor Alexander adopted their method of publicly proposing the names of those persons who were candidates for ordination. It is true, that the honour of this practice is likewise attributed to the Jews.

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retirement in Palestine<sup>115</sup>. The sentiments of Mammæa were adopted by her son Alexander, and the philosophic devotion of that emperor was marked by a singular but injudicious regard for the Christian religion. In his domestic chapel he placed the statues of Abraham, of Orpheus, of Apollonius, and of Christ, as an honour justly due to those respectable sages who had instructed mankind in the various modes of addressing their homage to the supreme and universal Deity<sup>116</sup>. A purer faith, as well as worship, was openly professed and practised among his household. Bishops, perhaps for the first time, were seen at court; and after the death of Alexander, when A.D. 235. the inhuman Maximin discharged his fury on the favourites and servants of his unfortunate benefactor, a great number of Christians, of every rank and of both sexes, were involved in the promiscuous massacre, which, on their account, has improperly received the name of Persecution<sup>117</sup>.

Notwith-

<sup>115</sup> Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. vi. c. 21. Hieronym. de Script. Eccles. c. 54. Mammæa was styled a holy and pious woman, both by the Christians and the Pagans. From the former, therefore, it was impossible that she should deserve that honourable epithet.

<sup>116</sup> See the Augustan History, p. 123. Mosheim (p. 465.) seems to refine too much on the domestic religion of Alexander. His design of building a public temple to Christ (Hist. August. p. 129.), and the object which was suggested either to him, or in similar circumstances to Hadrian, appear to have no other foundation than an improbable report, invented by the Christians, and credulously adopted by an historian of the age of Constantine.

<sup>117</sup> Euseb. l. vi. c. 28. It may be presumed, that the success of the Christians had exasperated the increasing bigotry of the Pagan.

Dion

Notwithstanding the cruel disposition of Maximin, the effects of his resentment against the Christians were of a very local and temporary nature, and the pious Origen, who had been proscribed as a devoted victim, was still reserved to convey the truths of the Gospel to the ear of monarchs<sup>118</sup>. He addressed several edifying letters to the emperor Philip, to his wife, and to his mother; and as soon as that prince, who was born in the neighbourhood of Palestine, had usurped the Imperial sceptre, the Christians acquired a friend and a protector. The public and even partial favour of Philip towards the sectaries of the new religion, and his constant reverence for the ministers of the church, gave some colour to the suspicion, which prevailed in his own times, that the emperor himself was become a convert to the faith<sup>119</sup>; and afforded some

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Of Maximin, Philip, and Decius.

A.D. 244.

Dion Cassius, who composed his history under the former reign, had most probably intended for the use of his master those counsels of persecution, which he ascribes to a better age, and to the favourite of Augustus. Concerning this oration of Mæcenas, or rather of Dion, I may refer to my own unbiassed opinion (vol. i. p. 55. Not. 25.), and to the Abbé de la Bleterie (*Memoires de l'Academie*, tom. xxiv. p. 303. tom. xxv. p. 432.).

<sup>118</sup> Orosius, l. vii. c. 19. mentions Origen as the object of Maximin's resentment; and Firmilianus, a Cappadocian bishop of that age, gives a just and confined idea of this persecution (apud Cyprian. *Epist.* 75.).

<sup>119</sup> The mention of those princes who were publicly supposed to be Christians, as we find it in an epistle of Dionysius of Alexandria (ap. Euseb. l. vii. c. 30.), evidently alludes to Philip and his family; and forms a contemporary evidence, that such a report had prevailed; but the Egyptian bishop, who lived at an humble distance from the court of Rome, expresses himself with a becoming diffidence concerning the truth of the fact. The epistles of Origen (which were extant

**C H A P.** some grounds for a fable which was afterwards  
**XVI.** invented, that he had been purified by confession  
 and penance from the guilt contracted by the  
**A. D. 249.** murder of his innocent predecessor<sup>120</sup>. The fall  
 of Philip introduced, with the change of masters,  
 a new system of government, so oppressive to  
 the Christians, that their former condition, ever  
 since the time of Domitian, was represented as a  
 state of perfect freedom and security, if compared  
 with the rigorous treatment which they experienced  
 under the short reign of Decius<sup>121</sup>. The virtues  
 of that prince will scarcely allow us to suspect  
 that he was actuated by a mean resentment  
 against the favourites of his predecessor, and it  
 is more reasonable to believe, that in the prosecution  
 of his general design to restore the purity of Roman  
 manners, he was desirous of delivering the empire  
 from what he condemned as a recent and criminal  
 superstition. The bishops of the most considerable  
 cities were removed by exile or death: the vigilance  
 of the magistrates prevented the clergy of Rome  
 during sixteen months from proceeding to a new  
 election; and it was the opinion of the Christians,  
 that the

in the time of Eusebius, see l. vi. c. 36 ) would most probably decide this curious, rather than important, question.

<sup>120</sup> Euseb. l. vi. c. 34. The story, as is usual, has been embellished by succeeding writers, and is confuted, with much superfluous learning, by Frederick Spanheim (*Opera Varia*, tom. ii. p. 400, &c.).

<sup>121</sup> Lactantius, *de Mortibus Persecutorum*, c. 3, 4. After celebrating the felicity and increase of the church, under a long succession of good princes; he adds, "Exstitit post annos plurimos, execrabile animal, Decius, qui vexaret Ecclesiam."

emperor

emperor would more patiently endure a competitor for the purple, than a bishop in the capital<sup>122</sup>. Were it possible to suppose that the penetration of Decius had discovered pride under the disguise of humility, or that he could foresee the temporal dominion which might insensibly arise from the claims of spiritual authority, we might be less surprised, that he should consider the successors of St. Peter as the most formidable rivals to those of Augustus.

The administration of Valerian was distinguished by a levity and inconstancy, ill-suited to the gravity of the *Roman Censor*. In the first part of his reign, he surpassed in clemency those princes who had been suspected of an attachment to the Christian faith. In the last three years and a half, listening to the insinuations of a minister addicted to the superstitions of Egypt, he adopted the maxims, and imitated the severity, of his predecessor Decius<sup>123</sup>. The accession of Gallienus, which increased the calamities of the empire, restored peace to the church; and the Christians obtained the free exercise of their religion, by an edict addressed to the bishops, and conceived in such terms as seemed to acknow-

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Of Valerian, Gallienus, and his successors.

A. D.  
253—260.

<sup>122</sup> Euseb. l. vi. c. 39. Cyprian. Epistol. 55. The see of Rome remained vacant from the martyrdom of Fabianus, the 20th of January, A. D. 250, till the election of Cornelius, the 4th of June, A. D. 251. Decius had probably left Rome, since he was killed before the end of that year.

<sup>123</sup> Euseb. l. vii. c. 10. Mosheim (p. 548.) has very clearly shewn, that the Pæfect Macrianus, and the Egyptian *Magus*, are one and the same person.

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ledge their office and public character<sup>124</sup>. The ancient laws, without being formally repealed, were suffered to sink into oblivion; and (excepting only some hostile intentions which are attributed to the emperor Aurelian<sup>125</sup>) the disciples of Christ passed above forty years in a state of prosperity, far more dangerous to their virtue than the severest trials of persecution.

Paul of Samosata, his manners.  
A. D. 260.

The story of Paul of Samosata, who filled the metropolitan see of Antioch, while the East was in the hands of Odenathus and Zenobia, may serve to illustrate the condition and character of the times. The wealth of that prelate was a sufficient evidence of his guilt, since it was neither derived from the inheritance of his fathers, nor acquired by the arts of honest industry. But Paul considered the service of the church as a very lucrative profession<sup>126</sup>. His ecclesiastical jurisdiction was venal and rapacious; he extorted

<sup>124</sup> Eusebius (l. viii. c. 13.) gives us a Greek version of this Latin edict, which seems to have been very concise. By another edict, he directed, that the *Cemeteria* should be restored to the Christians.

<sup>125</sup> Euseb. l. vii. c. 30. Lactantius de M. P. c. 6. Hieronym. in Chron. p. 177. Orosius, l. vii. c. 23. Their language is in general so ambiguous and incorrect, that we are at a loss to determine how far Aurelian had carried his intentions before he was assassinated. Most of the moderns (except Dodwell, Dissertat. Cyprian. xi. 64.) have seized the occasion of gaining a few extraordinary martyrs.

<sup>126</sup> Paul was better pleased with the title of *Ducenarius*, than with that of bishop. The *Ducenarius* was an Imperial procurator, so called from his salary of two hundred *Sestertii*, or 1,600 l. a year. (See Salmassius ad Hist. August. p. 124.) Some critics suppose, that the bishop of Antioch had actually obtained such an office from Zenobia, while others consider it only as a figurative expression of his pomp and insolence.

frequent

frequent contributions from the most opulent of the faithful, and converted to his own use a considerable part of the public revenue. By his pride and luxury, the Christian religion was rendered odious in the eyes of the Gentiles. His council chamber and his throne, the splendour with which he appeared in public, the suppliant croud who solicited his attention, the multitude of letters and petitions to which he dictated his answers, and the perpetual hurry of business in which he was involved, were circumstances much better suited to the state of a civil magistrate<sup>127</sup>, than to the humility of a primitive bishop. When he harangued his people from the pulpit, Paul affected the figurative style and the theatrical gestures of an Asiatic sophist, while the cathedral resounded with the loudest and most extravagant acclamations in the praise of his divine eloquence. Against those who resisted his power, or refused to flatter his vanity, the prelate of Antioch was arrogant, rigid, and inexorable; but he relaxed the discipline, and lavished the treasures, of the church on his dependent clergy, who were permitted to imitate their master in the gratification of every sensual appetite. For Paul indulged himself very freely in the pleasures of the table, and he had received into the episcopal palace two

<sup>127</sup> Simony was not unknown in those times; and the clergy sometimes bought what they intended to sell. It appears that the bishopric of Carthage was purchased by a wealthy matron, named Lucilla, for her servant Majorinus. The price was 400 *Follis*. (Monument. Antiq. ad calcem Optati, p. 263.) Every *Follis* contained 125 pieces of silver, and the whole sum may be computed at about 2,400*l*.

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He is de-  
graded  
from the  
see of An-  
tioch.  
A. D. 270.

young and beautiful women, as the constant companions of his leisure moments <sup>128</sup>.

Notwithstanding these scandalous vices, if Paul of Samosata had preserved the purity of the orthodox faith, his reign over the capital of Syria would have ended only with his life; and had a seasonable persecution intervened, an effort of courage might perhaps have placed him in the rank of saints and martyrs. Some nice and subtle errors, which he imprudently adopted and obstinately maintained, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, excited the zeal and indignation of the eastern churches <sup>129</sup>. From Egypt to the Euxine sea, the bishops were in arms and in motion. Several councils were held, confutations were published, excommunications were pronounced, ambiguous explanations were by turns accepted and refused, treaties were concluded and violated, and at length Paul of Samosata was degraded from his episcopal character, by the sentence of seventy or eighty bishops, who assembled for that purpose at Antioch, and who, without consulting the rights of the clergy or people, appointed a successor by their own authority. The manifest irregularity of this proceeding increased the numbers of the discontented faction; and as Paul, who was no

<sup>128</sup> If we are desirous of extenuating the vices of Paul, we must suspect the assembled bishops of the East of publishing the most malicious calumnies in circular epistles addressed to all the churches of the empire (ap. Euseb. l. vii. c. 30.).

<sup>129</sup> His heresy (like those of Noetus and Sabellius, in the same century) tended to confound the mysterious distinction of the divine persons. See Mosheim, p. 702, &c.

stranger

stranger to the arts of courts, had insinuated himself into the favour of Zenobia, he maintained above four years the possession of the episcopal house and office. The victory of Aurelian changed the face of the East, and the two contending parties, who applied to each other the epithets of schism and heresy, were either commanded or permitted to plead their cause before the tribunal of the conqueror. This public and very singular trial affords a convincing proof, that the existence, the property, the privileges; and the internal policy, of the Christians, were acknowledged, if not by the laws, at least by the magistrates of the empire. As a Pagan and as a soldier, it could scarcely be expected that Aurelian should enter into the discussion, whether the sentiments of Paul or those of his adversaries were most agreeable to the true standard of the orthodox faith. His determination, however, was founded on the general principles of equity and reason. He considered the bishops of Italy as the most impartial and respectable judges among the Christians, and as soon as he was informed that they had unanimously approved the sentence of the council, he acquiesced in their opinion, and immediately gave orders that Paul should be compelled to relinquish the temporal possessions belonging to an office, of which, in the judgment of his brethren, he had been regularly deprived. But while we applaud the justice, we should not overlook the policy, of Aurelian; who was desirous of restoring and cementing the dependence of the provinces on the capital, by every means which

The sentence is executed by Aurelian.  
A.D. 274.

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Peace and  
prosperity  
of the  
church  
under Dio-  
cletian.

A. D.  
284—303.

which could bind the interest or prejudices of any part of his subjects <sup>130</sup>.

Amidst the frequent revolutions of the empire, the Christians still flourished in peace and prosperity; and notwithstanding a celebrated æra of martyrs has been deduced from the accession of Diocletian <sup>131</sup>, the new system of policy introduced and maintained by the wisdom of that prince, continued, during more than eighteen years, to breathe the mildest and most liberal spirit of religious toleration. The mind of Diocletian himself was less adapted indeed to speculative inquiries, than to the active labours of war and government. His prudence rendered him averse to any great innovation, and though his temper was not very susceptible of zeal or enthusiasm, he always maintained an habitual regard for the ancient deities of the empire. But the leisure of the two empresses, of his wife Prisca, and of Valeria his daughter, permitted them to listen with more attention and respect to the truths of Christianity, which in every age has acknowledged its important obligations to female devotion <sup>132</sup>. The principal eunuchs,

<sup>130</sup> Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. vii. c. 30. We are entirely indebted to him for the curious story of Paul of Samosata.

<sup>131</sup> The *Æra of Martyrs*, which is still in use among the Copts and the Abyssinians, must be reckoned from the 29th of August, A. D. 284.; as the beginning of the Egyptian year was nineteen days earlier than the real accession of Diocletian. See *Dissertation Preliminaire à l'Art de vérifier les Dates*.

<sup>132</sup> The expression of Lactantius (de M. P. c. 15.) "*sacrificio pollui coegit*," implies their antecedent conversion to the faith; but does not seem to justify the assertion of Mosheim (p. 912.), that they had been privately baptized.

Lucian<sup>133</sup> and Dorotheus, Gorgonius and Andrew, who attended the person, possessed the favour, and governed the household, of Diocletian, protected by their powerful influence the faith which they had embraced. Their example was imitated by many of the most considerable officers of the palace, who, in their respective stations, had the care of the Imperial ornaments, of the robes, of the furniture, of the jewels, and even of the private treasury; and though it might sometimes be incumbent on them to accompany the emperor when he sacrificed in the temple<sup>134</sup>, they enjoyed, with their wives, their children, and their slaves, the free exercise of the Christian religion. Diocletian and his colleagues frequently conferred the most important offices on those persons, who avowed their abhorrence for the worship of the gods, but who had displayed abilities proper for the service of the state. The bishops held an honourable rank in their respective provinces, and were treated with distinction and respect, not only by the people, but by the magistrates themselves. Almost in every city, the ancient churches were found insufficient to contain the increasing multitude of profelytes; and in their place more stately and capacious edifices were erected for the public worship of the faithful. The corruption of manners and

<sup>133</sup> M. de Tillemont (*Memoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. v. part i. p. 11, 12.) has quoted from the *Spicilegium* of Dom. Luc d'Acheri, a very curious instruction which bishop Theonas composed for the use of Lucian.

<sup>134</sup> Lactantius de M. P. c. 20.

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principles, so forcibly lamented by Eusebius<sup>135</sup>, may be considered, not only as a consequence, but as a proof, of the liberty which the Christians enjoyed and abused under the reign of Diocletian. Prosperity had relaxed the nerves of discipline. Fraud, envy, and malice, prevailed in every congregation. The presbyters aspired to the episcopal office, which every day became an object more worthy of their ambition. The bishops, who contended with each other for ecclesiastical pre-eminence, appeared by their conduct to claim a secular and tyrannical power in the church; and the lively faith which still distinguished the Christians from the Gentiles, was shewn much less in their lives, than in their controversial writings.

Progress of  
zeal and  
super-  
stition  
among the  
Pagans.

Notwithstanding this seeming security, an attentive observer might discern some symptoms that threatened the church with a more violent persecution than any which she had yet endured. The zeal and rapid progress of the Christians awakened the Polytheists from their supine indifference in the cause of those deities, whom custom and education had taught them to revere. The mutual provocations of a religious war, which had already continued above two hundred years, exasperated the animosity of the contending parties. The Pagans were incensed at the rashness of a recent and obscure sect, which presumed to

<sup>135</sup> Eusebius, Hist. Ecclesiast. l. viii. c. 1. The reader who consults the original, will not accuse me of heightening the picture. Eusebius was about sixteen years of age at the accession of the emperor Diocletian,

accuse

accuse their countrymen of error, and to devote their ancestors to eternal misery. The habits of justifying the popular mythology against the invectives of an implacable enemy, produced in their minds some sentiments of faith and reverence for a system which they had been accustomed to consider with the most careless levity. The supernatural powers assumed by the church inspired at the same time terror and emulation. The followers of the established religion entrenched themselves behind a similar fortification of prodigies; invented new modes of sacrifice, of expiation, and of initiation<sup>136</sup>; attempted to revive the credit of their expiring oracles<sup>137</sup>; and listened with eager credulity to every impostor, who flattered their prejudices by a tale of wonders<sup>138</sup>. Both parties seemed to acknowledge the truth of those miracles which were claimed by their adversaries; and while they were con-

<sup>136</sup> We might quote, among a great number of instances, the mysterious worship of *Mythras*, and the *Taurobolia*; the latter of which became fashionable in the time of the Antonines (see a Dissertation of M. de Boze, in the *Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions*, tom. ii. p. 443.). The romance of *Apuleius* is as full of devotion as of satire.

<sup>137</sup> The impostor *Alexander* very strongly recommended the oracle of *Trophonius* at *Mallos*, and those of *Apollo*, at *Claros* and *Miletus* (*Lucian*, tom. ii. p. 236. Edit. Reitz). The last of these, whose singular history would furnish a very curious episode, was consulted by *Diocletian* before he published his edicts of persecution (*Lactantius*, de M. P. c. 11.).

<sup>138</sup> Besides the ancient stories of *Pythagoras* and *Arifteas*, the cures performed at the shrine of *Æsculapius*; and the fables related of *Apolonius* of *Tyana*, were frequently opposed to the miracles of *Christ*; though I agree with *Dr. Lardner* (see *Testimonies*, vol. iii. p. 253-351.), that when *Philostratus* composed the life of *Apollonius*, he had no such intention.

tented

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tented with ascribing them to the arts of magic, and to the power of dæmons, they mutually concurred in restoring and establishing the reign of superstition<sup>139</sup>. Philosophy, her most dangerous enemy, was now converted into her most useful ally. The groves of the academy, the gardens of Epicurus, and even the portico of the Stoics, were almost deserted, as so many different schools of scepticism or impiety<sup>140</sup>: and many among the Romans were desirous that the writings of Cicero should be condemned and suppressed by the authority of the senate<sup>141</sup>. The prevailing sect of the new Platonicians judged it prudent to connect themselves with the priests, whom perhaps they despised, against the Christians, whom they had reason to fear. These fashionable philosophers prosecuted the design of extracting allegorical wisdom from the fictions of the Greek poets; instituted mysterious rites of

<sup>139</sup> It is seriously to be lamented, that the Christian fathers, by acknowledging the supernatural, or, as they deem it, the infernal part of Paganism, destroy with their own hands the great advantage which we might otherwise derive from the liberal concessions of our adversaries.

<sup>140</sup> Julian (p. 301. Edit. Spanheim) expresses a pious joy, that the providence of the gods had extinguished the impious sects, and for the most part destroyed the books of the Pyrrhonians and Epicureans, which had been very numerous, since Epicurus himself composed no less than 300 volumes. See Diogenes Laertius, l. x. c. 16.

<sup>141</sup> Cumque alios audiam mustitare indignanter, et dicere oportere statui per Senatum, aboleantur ut hæc scripta, quibus Christiana Religio comprobetur, et vetustatis opprimatur auctoritas. Arnobius adversus Gentes, l. iii. p. 103, 104. He adds very properly, Erroris convincite Ciceronem . . . nam intercipere scripta, et publicatam velle submergere lectionem, non est Deum defendere sed veritatis confirmationem timere.

devotion

devotion for the use of their chosen disciples; recommended the worship of the ancient gods as the emblems or ministers of the Supreme Deity, and composed against the faith of the gospel many elaborate treatises<sup>142</sup>, which have since been committed to the flames by the prudence of orthodox emperors<sup>143</sup>.

Although the policy of Diocletian and the humanity of Constantius inclined them to preserve inviolate the maxims of toleration, it was soon discovered that their two associates, Maximian and Galerius, entertained the most implacable aversion for the name and religion of the Christians. The minds of those princes had never been enlightened by science; education had never softened their temper. They owed their greatness to their swords, and in their most elevated fortune they still retained their superstitious prejudices of soldiers and peasants. In the general administration of the provinces they obeyed the laws which their benefactor had established; but they frequently found occasions of exercising within their camp and palaces a secret persecution<sup>144</sup>, for which the imprudent zeal of the Christians

Maximian  
and Gale-  
rius punish  
a few  
Christian  
soldiers.

<sup>142</sup> Laſtantius (Divin. Institut. l. v. c. 2, 3.) gives a very clear and spirited account of two of these philosophic adversaries of the faith. The large treatise of Porphyry against the Christians consisted of thirty books, and was composed in Sicily about the year 270.

<sup>143</sup> See Socrates, Hist. Ecclesiast. l. i. c. 9. and Codex Justinian. l. i. tit. i. l. 3.

<sup>144</sup> Eusebius, l. viii. c. 4. §. 27. He limits the number of military martyrs, by a remarkable expression (*σπανίως τούτοις ως πρὸς καὶ διούργοις*), of which neither his Latin nor French translator have rendered

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Christians sometimes offered the most specious pretences. A sentence of death was executed upon Maximilianus, an African youth, who had been produced by his own father before the magistrate as a sufficient and legal recruit, but who obstinately persisted in declaring, that his conscience would not permit him to embrace the profession of a soldier<sup>145</sup>. It could scarcely be expected that any government should suffer the action of Marcellus the Centurion to pass with impunity. On the day of a public festival, that officer threw away his belt, his arms, and the ensigns of his office, and exclaimed with a loud voice, that he would obey none but Jesus Christ the eternal King, and that he renounced for ever the use of carnal weapons, and the service of an idolatrous master. The soldiers, as soon as they recovered from their astonishment, secured the person of Marcellus. He was examined in the city of Tingi by the president of that part of Mauritania; and as he was convicted by his own confession, he was condemned and beheaded for

dered the energy. Notwithstanding the authority of Eusebius, and the silence of Lactantius, Ambrose, Sulpicius, Orosius, &c. it has been long believed, that the Theban legion, consisting of 6000 Christians, suffered martyrdom, by the order of Maximian, in the valley of the Penine Alps. The story was first published about the middle of the VIIth century, by Eucherius, bishop of Lyons, who received it from certain persons, who received it from Isaac, bishop of Geneva, who is said to have received it from Theodore bishop of Ostdurum. The abbey of St. Maurice still subsists, a rich monument of the credulity of Sigismund, king of Burgundy. See an excellent Dissertation in the xxxvth volume of the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée*, p. 427—454.

<sup>145</sup> See the *Acta Sincera*, p. 299. The accounts of his martyrdom, and of that of Marcellus, bear every mark of truth and authenticity.

the crime of desertion <sup>146</sup>. Examples of such a nature favour much less of religious persecution than of martial or even civil law : but they served to alienate the mind of the emperors, to justify the severity of Galerius, who dismissed a great number of Christian officers from their employments ; and to authorize the opinion, that a sect of enthusiasts, which avowed principles so repugnant to the public safety, must either remain useless, or would soon become dangerous, subjects of the empire.

After the success of the Persian war had raised the hopes and the reputation of Galerius, he passed a winter with Diocletian in the palace of Nicomedia ; and the fate of Christianity became the object of their secret consultations <sup>147</sup>. The experienced emperor was still inclined to pursue measures of lenity ; and though he readily consented to exclude the Christians from holding any employments in the household or the army, he urged in the strongest terms the danger as well as cruelty of shedding the blood of those deluded fanatics. Galerius at length extorted from him the permission of summoning a council, composed of a few persons the most distinguished in the civil and military departments of the state. The important question was agitated in their presence, and those ambitious courtiers easily

Galerius prevails on Diocletian to begin a general persecution.

<sup>146</sup> *Acta Sincera*, p. 302.

<sup>147</sup> *De M. P. c. 11*. Lactantius (or whoever was the author of this little treatise) was, at that time, an inhabitant of Nicomedia ; but it seems difficult to conceive how he could acquire so accurate a knowledge of what passed in the Imperial cabinet.

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discerned, that it was incumbent on them to second, by their eloquence, the importunate violence of the Cæsar. It may be presumed, that they insisted on every topic which might interest the pride, the piety, or the fears, of their sovereign in the destruction of Christianity. Perhaps they represented, that the glorious work of the deliverance of the empire was left imperfect, as long as an independent people was permitted to subsist and multiply in the heart of the provinces. The Christians (it might speciously be alleged), renouncing the gods and the institutions of Rome, and constituted a distinct republic, which might yet be suppressed before it had acquired any military force; but which was already governed by its own laws and magistrates, was possessed of a public treasure, and was intimately connected in all its parts, by the frequent assemblies of the bishops, to whose decrees their numerous and opulent congregations yielded an implicit obedience. Arguments like these may seem to have determined the reluctant mind of Diocletian to embrace a new system of persecution: but though we may suspect, it is not in our power to relate, the secret intrigues of the palace, the private views and resentments, the jealousy of women or eunuchs, and all those trifling but decisive causes which so often influence the fate of empires, and the counsels of the wisest monarchs <sup>148</sup>.

<sup>148</sup> The only circumstance which we can discover, is the devotion and jealousy of the mother of Galerius. She is described by Lactantius, as *Deorum montium cultrix*; mulier admodum superstitiosa. She had a great influence over her son, and was offended by the disregard of some of her Christian servants.

The pleasure of the emperors was at length signified to the Christians, who, during the course of this melancholy winter, had expected, with anxiety, the result of so many secret consultations. The twenty-third of February, which coincided with the Roman festival of the Terminalia <sup>149</sup>, was appointed (whether from accident or design) to set bounds to the progress of Christianity. At the earliest dawn of day, the Prætorian præfect <sup>150</sup>, accompanied by several generals, tribunes, and officers of the revenue, repaired to the principal church of Nicomedia, which was situated on an eminence in the most populous and beautiful part of the city. The doors were instantly broke open; they rushed into the sanctuary; and as they searched in vain for some visible object of worship, they were obliged to content themselves with committing to the flames the volumes of holy scripture. The ministers of Diocletian were followed by a numerous body of guards and pioneers, who marched in order of battle, and were provided with all the instruments used in the destruction of fortified cities. By their incessant labour, a sacred edifice, which towered above the Imperial palace, and had long excited the indignation and envy

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Demolition  
of the  
church of  
Nicomedia.

A.D. 303.  
23d Feb.

<sup>149</sup> The worship and festival of the God Terminus are elegantly illustrated by M. de Boze, *Mem. de l'Academie des Inscriptions*, tom. i. p. 50.

<sup>150</sup> In our only MS. of Lactantius, we read *profectus*; but reason, and the authority of all the critics, allow us, instead of that word, which destroys the sense of the passage, to substitute *præfectus*.

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The first  
edict  
against the  
Christians.  
24th of  
February.

of the Gentiles, was in a few hours levelled with the ground <sup>151</sup>.

The next day the general edict of persecution was published <sup>152</sup>; and though Diocletian, still averse to the effusion of blood, had moderated the fury of Galerius, who proposed, that every one refusing to offer sacrifice, should immediately be burnt alive, the penalties inflicted on the obstinacy of the Christians might be deemed sufficiently rigorous and effectual. It was enacted, that their churches, in all the provinces of the empire, should be demolished to their foundations; and the punishment of death was denounced against all who should presume to hold any secret assemblies for the purpose of religious worship. The philosophers, who now assumed the unworthy office of directing the blind zeal of persecution, had diligently studied the nature and genius of the Christian religion; and as they were not ignorant that the speculative doctrines of the faith were supposed to be contained in the writings of the prophets, of the evangelists, and of the apostles, they most probably suggested the order, that the bishops and presbyters should deliver all their sacred books into the hands of the magistrates; who were commanded, under the severest penalties, to burn them in a public

<sup>151</sup> Lactantius de M. P. c. 12. gives a very lively picture of the destruction of the church.

<sup>152</sup> Mosheim (p. 922—926.), from many scattered passages of Lactantius and Eusebius, has collected a very just and accurate notion of this edict; though he sometimes deviates into conjecture and refinement.

and

and solemn manner. By the same edict, the property of the church was at once confiscated; and the several parts of which it might consist, were either sold to the highest bidder, united to the Imperial domain, bestowed on the cities and corporations, or granted to the solicitations of rapacious courtiers. After taking such effectual measures to abolish the worship, and to dissolve the government, of the Christians, it was thought necessary to subject to the most intolerable hardships the condition of those perverse individuals who should still reject the religion of Nature, of Rome, and of their ancestors. Persons of a liberal birth were declared incapable of holding any honours or employments; slaves were for ever deprived of the hopes of freedom, and the whole body of the people were put out of the protection of the law. The judges were authorized to hear and to determine every action that was brought against a Christian. But the Christians were not permitted to complain of any injury which they themselves had suffered; and thus those unfortunate sectaries were exposed to the severity, while they were excluded from the benefits, of public justice. This new species of martyrdom, so painful, and lingering, so obscure and ignominious, was, perhaps, the most proper to weary the constancy of the faithful: nor can it be doubted that the passions and interest of mankind were disposed on this occasion to second the designs of the emperors. But the policy of a well-ordered government must sometimes have

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inter.

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Zeal and  
punish-  
ment of a  
Christian.

interposed in behalf of the oppressed Christians ; nor was it possible for the Roman princes entirely to remove the apprehension of punishment, or to connive at every act of fraud and violence, without exposing their own authority and the rest of their subjects to the most alarming dangers<sup>153</sup>.

This edict was scarcely exhibited to the public view, in the most conspicuous place of Nicomedia, before it was torn down by the hands of a Christian, who expressed, at the same time, by the bitterest invectives, his contempt as well as abhorrence for such impious and tyrannical governors. His offence, according to the mildest laws, amounted to treason, and deserved death. And if it be true that he was a person of rank and education, those circumstances could serve only to aggravate his guilt. He was burnt, or rather roasted, by a slow fire ; and his executioners, zealous to revenge the personal insult which had been offered to the emperors, exhausted every refinement of cruelty, without being able to subdue his patience, or to alter the steady and insulting smile which in his dying agonies he still preserved in his countenance. The Christians, though they confessed that his conduct had not been strictly conformable to the laws of prudence, admired the divine fervour of his zeal ; and the excessive commendations which they lavished on the memory of their hero and martyr, con-

<sup>153</sup> Many ages afterwards, Edward I. practised, with great success, the same mode of persecution against the clergy of England. See Hume's History of England, vol. ii. p. 300, last 4to edition.

tributed

tributed to fix a deep impression of terror and hatred in the mind of Diocletian <sup>154</sup>.

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His fears were soon alarmed by the view of a danger from which he very narrowly escaped. Within fifteen days the palace of Nicomedia, and even the bedchamber of Diocletian, were twice in flames; and though both times they were extinguished without any material damage, the singular repetition of the fire was justly considered as an evident proof that it had not been the effect of chance or negligence. The suspicion naturally fell on the Christians; and it was suggested, with some degree of probability, that those desperate fanatics, provoked by their present sufferings, and apprehensive of impending calamities, had entered into a conspiracy with their faithful brethren, the eunuchs of the palace, against the lives of two emperors, whom they detested as the irreconcilable enemies of the church of God. Jealousy and resentment prevailed in every breast, but especially in that of Diocletian. A great number of persons, distinguished either by the offices which they had filled, or by the favour which they had enjoyed, were thrown into prison. Every mode of torture was put in practice, and the court, as well as city, was polluted with many bloody executions <sup>155</sup>.

Fire of the  
palace of  
Nicomedia  
imputed to  
the Christ-  
ians.

But,

<sup>154</sup> Lactantius only calls him *quidam*, *et si non recte, magno tamen animo*, &c. c. 12. Eusebius (l. viii. c. 5.) adorns him with secular honours. Neither have condescended to mention his name; but the Greeks celebrate his memory under that of John. See Tillemont, *Memoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. v. part ii. p. 320.

<sup>155</sup> Lactantius de M. P. c. 13, 14. *Potentissimi quondam Eunuchi necati, per quos Palatium et ipse constabat.* Eusebius (l. viii. c. 6.)

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But as it was found impossible to extort any discovery of this mysterious transaction, it seems incumbent on us either to presume the innocence, or to admire the resolution, of the sufferers. A few days afterwards Galerius hastily withdrew himself from Nicomedia, declaring, that if he delayed his departure from that devoted palace, he should fall a sacrifice to the rage of the Christians. The ecclesiastical historians, from whom alone we derive a partial and imperfect knowledge of this persecution, are at a loss how to account for the fears and dangers of the emperors. Two of these writers, a Prince and a Rhetorician, were eye-witnesses of the fire of Nicomedia. The one ascribes it to lightning, and the divine wrath; the other affirms, that it was kindled by the malice of Galerius himself<sup>156</sup>.

Execution  
of the first  
edict.

As the edict against the Christians was designed for a general law of the whole empire, and as Diocletian and Galerius, though they might not wait for the consent, were assured of the concurrence, of the western princes, it would appear more consonant to our ideas of policy, that the governors of all the provinces should have received secret instructions to publish, on one and the same day, this declaration of war within their respective departments. It was at least to be

mentions the cruel extortions of the eunuchs, Gorgonius and Dorotheus, and of Anthimius, bishop of Nicomedia; and both those writers describe, in a vague but tragical manner, the horrid scenes which were acted even in the Imperial presence.

<sup>156</sup> See Lactantius, Eusebius, and Constantine, ad Cœtum Sanctorum, c. 25. Eusebius confesses his ignorance of the cause of the fire.

expected,

expected, that the convenience of the public highways and established posts would have enabled the emperors to transmit their orders with the utmost dispatch from the palace of Nicomedia to the extremities of the Roman world; and that they would not have suffered fifty days to elapse, before the edict was published in Syria, and near four months before it was signified to the cities of Africa<sup>357</sup>. This delay may perhaps be imputed to the cautious temper of Diocletian, who had yielded a reluctant consent to the measures of persecution, and who was desirous of trying the experiment under his more immediate eye, before he gave way to the disorders and discontent which it must inevitably occasion in the distant provinces. At first, indeed, the magistrates were restrained from the effusion of blood; but the use of every other severity was permitted, and even recommended to their zeal; nor could the Christians, though they cheerfully resigned the ornaments of their churches, resolve to interrupt their religious assemblies, or to deliver their sacred books to the flames. The pious obstinacy of Felix, an African bishop, appears to have embarrassed the subordinate ministers of the government. The curator of his city sent him in chains to the proconsul. The proconsul transmitted him to the Prætorian præfect of Italy; and Felix, who disdained even to give an evasive answer, was at length beheaded at Venusia, in Lucania, a place on which the birth of Horace

<sup>357</sup> Tillemont, *Memoires Ecclesiast.* tom. v. part i. p. 43.

has

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has conferred fame<sup>158</sup>. This precedent, and perhaps some Imperial rescript, which was issued in consequence of it, appeared to authorize the governors of provinces, in punishing with death the refusal of the Christians to deliver up their sacred books. There were undoubtedly many persons who embraced this opportunity of obtaining the crown of martyrdom; but there were likewise too many who purchased an ignominious life, by discovering and betraying the holy scripture into the hands of infidels. A great number even of bishops and presbyters acquired, by this criminal compliance, the opprobrious epithet of *Traditors*; and their offence was productive of much present scandal, and of much future discord, in the African church<sup>159</sup>.

Demolition of the churches.

The copies, as well as the versions of scripture, were already so multiplied in the empire, that the most severe inquisition could no longer be attended with any fatal consequences; and even the sacrifice of those volumes, which, in every congregation, were preserved for public use, required the consent of some treacherous and unworthy Christians. But the ruin of the churches was easily effected by the authority of the government, and by the labour of the Pagans. In some provinces, however, the magistrates contented themselves with shutting up the places of

<sup>158</sup> See the *Acta Sincera* of Ruinart, p. 353; those of *Felix of Thibara*, or *Tibiur*, appear much less corrupted than in the other editions, which afford a lively specimen of legendary licence.

<sup>159</sup> See the first book of *Optatus of Milevis* against the *Donatists* at Paris, 1700. Edit. Dupin. He lived under the reign of Valens.

religious

religious worship. In others, they more literally complied with the terms of the edict; and after taking away the doors, the benches, and the pulpit, which they burnt, as it were in a funeral pile, they completely demolished the remainder of the edifice<sup>160</sup>. It is perhaps to this melancholy occasion, that we should apply a very remarkable story, which is related with so many circumstances of variety and improbability, that it serves rather to excite than to satisfy our curiosity. In a small town in Phrygia, of whose name as well as situation we are left ignorant, it should seem, that the magistrates and the body of the people had embraced the Christian faith; and as some resistance might be apprehended to the execution of the edict, the governor of the province was supported by a numerous detachment of legionaries. On their approach the citizens threw themselves into the church, with the resolution either of defending by arms that sacred edifice, or of perishing in its ruins. They indignantly rejected the notice and permission which was given to them, to retire, till the soldiers, provoked by their obstinate refusal, set fire to the building on all sides, and consumed, by this ex-

<sup>160</sup> The ancient monuments, published at the end of Optatus, p. 261, &c. describe, in a very circumstantial manner, the proceedings of the governors in the destruction of churches. They made a minute inventory of the plate, &c. which they found in them. That of the church of Cirta, in Numidia, is still extant. It consisted of two chalices of gold, and six of silver; six urns, one kettle, seven lamps, all likewise of silver; besides a large quantity of brass utensils, and wearing apparel.

traordinary

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Subse-  
quent  
edicts.

traordinary kind of martyrdom, a great number of Phrygians, with their wives and children <sup>161</sup>.

Some slight disturbances, though they were suppressed almost as soon as excited, in Syria and the frontiers of Armenia, afforded the enemies of the church a very plausible occasion to insinuate, that those troubles had been secretly fomented by the intrigues of the bishops, who had already forgotten their ostentatious professions of passive and unlimited obedience <sup>161</sup>. The resentment, or the fears, of Diocletian, at length transported him beyond the bounds of moderation, which he had hitherto preserved, and he declared, in a series of cruel edicts, his intention of abolishing the Christian name. By the first of these edicts, the governors of the provinces were directed to apprehend all persons of the ecclesiastical order; and the prisons, destined for the vilest criminals, were soon filled with a multitude of bishops, presbyters, deacons,

<sup>161</sup> Lactantius (*Institut. Divin. v. 11.*) confines the calamity to the *conventiculum*, with its congregation. Eusebius (*viii. 11.*) extends it to a whole city, and introduces something very like a regular siege. His ancient Latin translator, Rufinus, adds the important circumstance of the permission given to the inhabitants of retiring from thence. As Phrygia reached to the confines of Isauria, it is possible that the restless temper of those independent Barbarians may have contributed to this misfortune.

<sup>162</sup> Eusebius, *l. viii. c. 6.* M. de Valois (with some probability) thinks that he has discovered the Syrian rebellion in an oration of Libanius; and that it was a rash attempt of the tribune Eugenius, who with only five hundred men seized Antioch, and might perhaps allure the Christians by the promise of religious toleration. From Eusebius, (*l. ix. c. 8.*) as well as from Moses of Chorene (*Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 77, &c.*) it may be inferred, that Christianity was already introduced into Armenia.

readers,

readers, and exorcists. By a second edict, the magistrates were commanded to employ every method of severity, which might reclaim them from their odious superstition, and oblige them to return to the established worship of the gods. This rigorous order was extended, by a subsequent edict, to the whole body of Christians, who were exposed to a violent and general persecution <sup>163</sup>. Instead of those salutary restraints, which had required the direct and solemn testimony of an accuser, it became the duty as well as the interest of the Imperial officers, to discover, to pursue, and to torment, the most obnoxious among the faithful. Heavy penalties were denounced against all who should presume to save a proscribed sectary from the just indignation of the gods, and of the emperors. Yet, notwithstanding the severity of this law, the virtuous courage of many of the Pagans, in concealing their friends, or relations, affords an honourable proof, that the rage of superstition had not extinguished in their minds the sentiments of nature and humanity <sup>164</sup>.

Diocletian had no sooner published his edicts against the Christians, than, as if he had been desirous of committing to other hands the work of persecution, he divested himself of the Impe-

General  
idea of the  
persecu-  
tion,

<sup>163</sup> See Mosheim, p. 938; the text of Eusebius very plainly shews, that the governors, whose powers were enlarged, not restrained, by the new laws, could punish with death the most obstinate Christians, as an example to their brethren.

<sup>164</sup> Athanasius, p. 833. ap. Tillemont, Mem. Ecclesiast. tom. v. part i. p. 90.

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in the west-  
ern pro-  
vinces un-  
der Con-  
stantius  
and Con-  
stantine;

rial purple. The character and situation of his colleagues and successors sometimes urged them to enforce, and sometimes inclined them to suspend, the execution of these rigorous laws; nor can we acquire a just and distinct idea of this important period of ecclesiastical history, unless we separately consider the state of Christianity, in the different parts of the empire, during the space of ten years, which elapsed between the first edicts of Diocletian, and the final peace of the church.

The mild and humane temper of Constantius was averse to the oppression of any part of his subjects. The principal offices of his palace were exercised by Christians. He loved their persons, esteemed their fidelity, and entertained not any dislike to their religious principles. But as long as Constantius remained in the subordinate station of Cæsar, it was not in his power openly to reject the edicts of Diocletian, or to disobey the commands of Maximian. His authority contributed, however, to alleviate the sufferings which he pitied and abhorred. He consented, with reluctance, to the ruin of the churches; but he ventured to protect the Christians themselves from the fury of the populace, and from the rigour of the laws. The provinces of Gaul (under which we may probably include those of Britain) were indebted for the singular tranquillity which they enjoyed, to the gentle interposition of their sovereign<sup>165</sup>. But Datianus, the

<sup>165</sup> Eusebius, l. viii. c. 13. Lactantius de M. P. c. 15. Dodwell (Dissertat. Cyprian. xi. 75.) represents them as inconsistent with each

the president or governor of Spain, actuated either by zeal or policy, chose rather to execute the public edicts of the emperors, than to understand the secret intentions of Constantius; and it can scarcely be doubted, that his provincial administration was stained with the blood of a few martyrs<sup>166</sup>. The elevation of Constantius to the supreme and independent dignity of Augustus, gave a free scope to the exercise of his virtues, and the shortness of his reign did not prevent him from establishing a system of toleration, of which he left the precept and the example to his son Constantine. His fortunate son, from the first moment of his accession, declaring himself the protector of the church, at length deserved the appellation of the first emperor who publicly professed and established the Christian religion. The motives of his conversion, as they may variously be deduced from benevolence, from policy, from conviction, or from remorse; and the progress of the revolution, which, under his powerful influence, and that of his sons, rendered Christianity the reigning religion of the Roman

each other. But the former evidently speaks of Constantius in the station of Cæsar, and the latter of the same prince in the rank of Augustus.

<sup>166</sup> Datianus is mentioned in Gruter's Inscriptions, as having determined the limits between the territories of Pax Julia, and those of Eboræ, both cities in the southern part of Lusitania. If we recollect the neighbourhood of those places to Cape St. Vincent, we may suspect that the celebrated deacon and martyr of that name has been inaccurately assigned by Prudentius, &c. to Saragossa, or Valentia. See the pompous history of his sufferings, in the *Memoires de Tillémont*, tom. v. part ii. p. 58—85. Some critics are of opinion, that the department of Constantius, as Cæsar, did not include Spain, which still continued under the immediate jurisdiction of Maximian.

empire,

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empire, will form a very interesting and important chapter in the third volume of this history. At present it may be sufficient to observe, that every victory of Constantine was productive of some relief or benefit to the church.

in Italy  
and Africa,  
under  
Maximian  
and Se-  
verus;

The provinces of Italy and Africa experienced a short but violent persecution. The rigorous edicts of Diocletian were strictly and cheerfully executed by his associate Maximian, who had long hated the Christians, and who delighted in acts of blood and violence. In the autumn of the first year of the persecution, the two emperors met at Rome to celebrate their triumph; several oppressive laws appear to have issued from their secret consultations, and the diligence of the magistrates was animated by the presence of their sovereigns. After Diocletian had divested himself of the purple, Italy and Africa were administered under the name of Severus, and were exposed, without defence, to the implacable resentment of his master Galerius. Among the martyrs of Rome, Adauctus deserves the notice of posterity. He was of a noble family in Italy, and had raised himself, through the successive honours of the palace, to the important office of treasurer of the private demesnes. Adauctus is the more remarkable for being the only person of rank and distinction who appears to have suffered death, during the whole course of this general persecution<sup>167</sup>.

<sup>167</sup> Eusebius, l. viii. c. xi. Gruter, Inscript. p. 1171. No. 18. Rufinus has mistaken the office of Adauctus, as well as the place of his martyrdom.

The revolt of Maxentius immediately restored peace to the churches of Italy and Africa; and the same tyrant who oppressed every other class of his subjects, shewed himself just, humane, and even partial, towards the afflicted Christians. He depended on their gratitude and affection, and very naturally presumed, that the injuries which they had suffered, and the dangers which they still apprehended from his most inveterate enemy, would secure the fidelity of a party already considerable by their numbers and opulence<sup>168</sup>. Even the conduct of Maxentius towards the bishops of Rome and Carthage, may be considered as the proof of his toleration, since it is probable that the most orthodox princes would adopt the same measures with regard to their established clergy. Marcellus, the former of those prelates, had thrown the capital into confusion, by the severe penance which he imposed on a great number of Christians, who, during the late persecution, had renounced or dissembled their religion. The rage of faction broke out in frequent and violent seditions; the blood of the faithful was shed by each other's hands, and the exile of Marcellus, whose prudence seems to have been less eminent than his zeal, was found to be the only measure capable of restoring peace to the distracted church of

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under  
Maxen-  
tius;

<sup>168</sup> Eusebius, l. viii. c. 14. But as Maxentius was vanquished by Constantine, it suited the purpose of Lactantius to place his death among those of the persecutors.

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Rome<sup>169</sup>. The behaviour of Mensurius, bishop of Carthage, appears to have been still more reprehensible. A deacon of that city had published a libel against the emperor. The offender took refuge in the episcopal palace; and though it was somewhat early to advance any claims of ecclesiastical immunities, the bishop refused to deliver him up to the officers of justice. For this treasonable resistance, Mensurius was summoned to court, and instead of receiving a legal sentence of death or banishment, he was permitted, after a short examination, to return to his diocese<sup>170</sup>. Such was the happy condition of the Christian subjects of Maxentius, that whenever they were desirous of procuring for their own use any bodies of martyrs, they were obliged to purchase them from the most distant provinces of the East. A story is related of Aglae, a Roman lady, descended from a consular family, and possessed of so ample an estate, that it required

<sup>169</sup> The epitaph of Marcellus is to be found in Gruter, Inscrip. p. 1173. No. 3. and it contains all that we know of his history. Marcellinus and Marcellus, whose names follow in the list of popes, are supposed by many critics to be different persons; but the learned Abbé de Longuerre was convinced that they were one and the same.

Veridicus rector lapsis quia crimina flere  
Prædixit miseris, fuit omnibus hostis amarus.  
Hinc furor, hinc odium; sequitur discordia, lites,  
Seditio, cædes: solvuntur fœdera pacis.  
Crimen ob-alterius, Christum qui in pace negavit  
Finibus expulsum patriæ est feritate Tyranni.  
Hæc breviter Damasus voluit comperta referre:  
Marcelli populus meritum cognoscere possit.

We may observe that Damasus was made bishop of Rome, A. D. 366.

<sup>170</sup> Optatus contr. Donatist. l. i. c. 17, 18;

the

the management of seventy-three stewards. Among these, Boniface was the favourite of his mistress; and as Aglae mixed love with devotion, it is reported that he was admitted to share her bed. Her fortune enabled her to gratify the pious desire of obtaining some sacred relics from the East. She intrusted Boniface with a considerable sum of gold, and a large quantity of aromatics; and her lover, attended by twelve horsemen and three covered chariots, undertook a remote pilgrimage, as far as Tarsus in Cilicia<sup>171</sup>.

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The sanguinary temper of Galerius, the first and principal author of the persecution, was formidable to those Christians, whom their misfortunes had placed within the limits of his dominions; and it may fairly be presumed, that many persons of a middle rank, who were not confined by the chains either of wealth or of poverty, very frequently deserted their native country, and sought a refuge in the milder climate of the West. As long as he commanded only the armies and provinces of Illyricum, he could with difficulty either find or make a considerable number of martyrs, in a warlike country, which had entertained the missionaries of the gospel with more coldness and reluctance than any other part of the empire<sup>172</sup>. But when Galerius

in Illyricum and the East, under Galerius and Maximian.

<sup>171</sup> The Acts of the Passion of St. Boniface, which abound in miracles and declamation, are published by Ruinart (p. 283—292), both in Greek and Latin, from the authority of very ancient manuscripts.

<sup>172</sup> During the four first centuries, there exist few traces of either bishops or bishoprics in the western Illyricum. It has been thought probable

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lerius had obtained the supreme power and the government of the East, he indulged in their fullest extent his zeal and cruelty, not only in the provinces of Thrace and Asia, which acknowledged his immediate jurisdiction; but in those of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, where Maximin gratified his own inclination, by yielding a rigorous obedience to the stern commands of his benefactor<sup>173</sup>. The frequent disappointments of his ambitious views, the experience of six years of persecution, and the salutary reflections which a lingering and painful distemper suggested to the mind of Galerius, at length convinced him, that the most violent efforts of despotism are insufficient to extirpate a whole people, or to subdue their religious prejudices. Desirous of repairing the mischief that he had occasioned, he published in his own name, and in those of Licinius and Constantine, a general edict, which, after a pompous recital of the Imperial titles, proceeded in the following manner :

Galerius  
publishes  
an edict of  
toleration.

“ Among the important cares which have occupied our mind for the utility and preservation of the empire, it was our intention to correct and re-establish all things according to

probable that the primate of Milan extended his jurisdiction over Sirsionum, the capital of that great province. See the *Geographia Sacra* of Charles de St. Paul, p. 68—76. with the observations of Lucas Holstenius.

<sup>173</sup> The viii<sup>th</sup> book of Eusebius, as well as the supplement concerning the martyrs of Palestine, principally relate to the persecution of Galerius and Maximin. The general lamentations with which Lactantius opens the vi<sup>th</sup> book of his *Divine Institutions*, allude to their cruelty.

“ the

“ the ancient laws and public discipline of the  
 “ Romans. We were particularly desirous of  
 “ reclaiming, into the way of reason and nature,  
 “ the deluded Christians, who had renounced the  
 “ religion and ceremonies instituted by their  
 “ fathers; and presumptuously despising the  
 “ practice of antiquity, had invented extravagant  
 “ laws and opinions according to the dictates of  
 “ their fancy, and had collected a various society  
 “ from the different provinces of our empire.  
 “ The edicts which we have published to enforce  
 “ the worship of the gods, having exposed many  
 “ of the Christians to danger and distress, many  
 “ having suffered death, and many more, who  
 “ still persist in their impious folly, being left  
 “ destitute of *any* public exercise of religion, we  
 “ are disposed to extend to those unhappy men  
 “ the effects of our wonted clemency. We per-  
 “ mit them therefore freely to profess their pri-  
 “ vate opinions, and to assemble in their con-  
 “ venticles without fear or molestation, provided  
 “ always that they preserve a due respect to the  
 “ established laws and government. By another  
 “ rescript we shall signify our intentions to the  
 “ judges and magistrates; and we hope that our  
 “ indulgence will engage the Christians to offer  
 “ up their prayers to the deity whom they adore,  
 “ for our safety and prosperity, for their own,  
 “ and for that of the republic<sup>174</sup>.” It is not

<sup>174</sup> Eusebius (l. viii. c. 17.) has given us a Greek version, and Lactantius (de M. P. c. 34.), the Latin original, of this memorable edict. Neither of these writers seems to recollect how directly it contradicts whatever they have just affirmed of the remorse and repentance of Galerius.

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usually in the language of edicts and manifestos, that we should search for the real character of the secret motives of princes; but as these were the words of a dying emperor, his situation, perhaps, may be admitted as a pledge of his sincerity.

Peace of  
the church.

When Galerius subscribed this edict of toleration, he was well assured that Licinius would readily comply with the inclinations of his friend and benefactor, and that any measures in favour of the Christians would obtain the approbation of Constantine. But the emperor would not venture to insert in the preamble the name of Maximin, whose consent was of the greatest importance, and who succeeded a few days afterwards to the provinces of Asia. In the first six months, however, of his new reign, Maximin affected to adopt the prudent counsels of his predecessor; and though he never condescended to secure the tranquillity of the church by a public edict, Sabinus, his Prætorian præfect, addressed a circular letter to all the governors and magistrates of the provinces, expatiating on the Imperial clemency, acknowledging the invincible obstinacy of the Christians, and directing the officers of justice to cease their ineffectual prosecutions, and to connive at the secret assemblies of those enthusiasts. In consequence of these orders, great numbers of Christians were released from prison, or delivered from the mines. The confessors, singing hymns of triumph, returned into their own countries; and those who had yielded to the violence of the tempest solicited

cited with tears of repentance their re-admission into the bosom of the church <sup>175</sup>.

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Maximin  
prepares  
to renew  
the perse-  
cution.

But this treacherous calm was of short duration; nor could the Christians of the East place any confidence in the character of their sovereign. Cruelty and superstition were the ruling passions of the soul of Maximin. The former suggested the means, the latter pointed out the objects, of persecution. The emperor was devoted to the worship of the gods, to the study of magic, and to the belief of oracles. The prophets or philosophers, whom he revered as the favourites of heaven, were frequently raised to the government of provinces, and admitted into his most secret counsels. They easily convinced him, that the Christians had been indebted for their victories to their regular discipline, and that the weakness of polytheism had principally flowed from a want of union and subordination among the ministers of religion. A system of government was therefore instituted, which was evidently copied from the policy of the church. In all the great cities of the empire, the temples were repaired and beautified by the order of Maximin; and the officiating priests of the various deities were subjected to the authority of a superior pontiff, destined to oppose the bishop, and to promote the cause of paganism. These pontiffs acknowledged, in their turn, the supreme jurisdiction of the metropolitans or high priests of the province, who acted as the immediate

<sup>175</sup> Eusebius, l. ix. c. 1. He inserts the epistle of the præfect.

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vicegerents of the emperor himself. A white robe was the ensign of their dignity; and these new prelates were carefully selected from the most noble and opulent families. By the influence of the magistrates, and of the sacerdotal order, a great number of dutiful addresses were obtained, particularly from the cities of Nicomedia, Antioch, and Tyre, which artfully represented the well-known intentions of the court as the general sense of the people; solicited the emperor to consult the laws of justice rather than the dictates of his clemency; expressed their abhorrence of the Christians, and humbly prayed that those impious sectaries might at least be excluded from the limits of their respective territories. The answer of Maximin to the address which he obtained from the citizens of Tyre is still extant. He praises their zeal and devotion in terms of the highest satisfaction, descants on the obstinate impiety of the Christians, and betrays, by the readiness with which he consents to their banishment, that he considered himself as receiving, rather than as conferring, an obligation. The priests as well as the magistrates were empowered to enforce the execution of his edicts, which were engraved on tables of brass; and though it was recommended to them to avoid the effusion of blood, the most cruel and ignominious punishments were inflicted on the refractory Christians<sup>176</sup>.

<sup>176</sup> See Eusebius, l. viii. c. 14. l. ix. c. 2—8. Lactantius de M. P. c. 36. These writers agree in representing the arts of Maximin: but the former relates the execution of several martyrs, while the latter expressly affirms, *occidi servos Dei vetuit*.

The Asiatic Christians had every thing to dread from the severity of a bigoted monarch, who prepared his measures of violence with such deliberate policy. But a few months had scarcely elapsed, before the edicts published by the two western emperors obliged Maximin to suspend the prosecution of his designs: the civil war which he so rashly undertook against Licinius employed all his attention; and the defeat and death of Maximin soon delivered the church from the last and most implacable of her enemies <sup>177</sup>.

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End of the  
persecu-  
tions.

In this general view of the persecution, which was first authorized by the edicts of Diocletian, I have purposely refrained from describing the particular sufferings and deaths of the Christian martyrs. It would have been an easy task, from the history of Eusebius, from the declamations of Lactantius, and from the most ancient acts, to collect a long series of horrid and disgusting pictures, and to fill many pages with racks and scourges, with iron hooks, and red-hot beds, and with all the variety of tortures which fire and steel, savage beasts and more savage executioners, could inflict on the human body. These melancholy scenes might be enlivened by a crowd of visions and miracles destined either to delay the death, to celebrate the triumph, or to discover the relics, of those canonized saints who suffered for the name of Christ. But I cannot determine

Probable  
account of  
the suffer-  
ings of the  
martyrs  
and com-  
fessors.

<sup>177</sup> A few days before his death, he published a very ample edict of toleration, in which he imputes all the severities which the Christians suffered to the judges and governors, who had misunderstood his intentions. See the Edict, in Eusebius, l. ix. c. 10.

what

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what I ought to transcribe, till I am satisfied how much I ought to believe. The gravest of the ecclesiastical historians, Eusebius himself, indirectly confesses, that he has related whatever might redound to the glory, and that he has suppressed all that could tend to the disgrace, of religion<sup>77</sup>. Such an acknowledgment will naturally excite a suspicion that a writer who has so openly violated one of the fundamental laws of history, has not paid a very strict regard to the observance of the other; and the suspicion will derive additional credit from the character of Eusebius which was less tinged with credulity, and more practised in the arts of courts, than that of almost any of his contemporaries. On some particular occasions, when the magistrates were exasperated by some personal motives of interest or resentment, when the zeal of the martyrs urged them to forget the rules of prudence, and perhaps of decency, to overturn the altars, to pour out imprecations against the emperors, or to strike the judge as he sat on his tribunal, it may be presumed that every mode of torture, which cruelty could invent or constancy could endure, was exhausted on those devoted

<sup>77</sup> Such is the *fair* deduction from two remarkable passages in Eusebius, l. viii. c. 2. and de Martyr. Palestin. c. 12. The prudence of the historian has exposed his own character to censure and suspicion. It is well known that he himself had been thrown into prison; and it was suggested that he had purchased his deliverance by some dishonourable compliance. The reproach was urged in his lifetime, and even in his presence, at the council of Tyre. See Tillemont, *Mémoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. viii. part i. p. 62.

victims.

victims<sup>179</sup>. Two circumstances, however, have been unwarily mentioned, which insinuate that the general treatment of the Christians, who had been apprehended by the officers of justice, was less intolerable than it is usually imagined to have been. 1. The confessors who were condemned to work in the mines were permitted, by the humanity or the negligence of their keepers, to build chapels, and freely to profess their religion in the midst of those dreary habitations<sup>180</sup>. 2. The bishops were obliged to check and to censure the forward zeal of the Christians, who voluntarily threw themselves into the hands of the magistrates. Some of these were persons oppressed by poverty and debts, who blindly sought to terminate a miserable existence by a glorious death. Others were allured by the hope, that a short confinement would expiate the sins of a whole life; and others again were actuated by the less honourable motive of deriving a plentiful subsistence, and perhaps a considerable profit, from the alms which the charity of the faithful bestowed on the prisoners<sup>181</sup>. After the

<sup>179</sup> The ancient, and perhaps authentic, account of the sufferings of Tarachus, and his companions (*Acta Sincera* Ruinart, p. 419—448.), is filled with strong expressions of resentment and contempt, which could not fail of irritating the magistrate. The behaviour of Ædeseus to Hierocles, præfect of Egypt, was still more extraordinary, *λογος τι καὶ ἔργος τῶν δικαστῶν . . . περιβαλλών*. Euseb. de Martyr. Palestin. c. 5.

<sup>180</sup> Euseb. de Martyr. Palestin. c. 13.

<sup>181</sup> Augustin. Collar. Carthagin, Dei, iii. c. 13. ap. Tillemont, *Memoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. v. part i. p. 46. The controversy with the Donatists has reflected some, though perhaps a partial, light on the history of the African church.

church

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church had triumphed over all her enemies, the interest as well as vanity of the captives prompted them to magnify the merit of their respective suffering. A convenient distance of time or place gave an ample scope to the progress of fiction; and the frequent instances which might be alleged of holy martyrs, whose wounds had been instantly healed, whose strength had been renewed, and whose lost members had miraculously been restored, were extremely convenient for the purpose of removing every difficulty, and of silencing every objection. The most extravagant legends, as they conduced to the honour of the church, were applauded by the credulous multitude, countenanced by the power of the clergy, and attested by the suspicious evidence of ecclesiastical history.

Number of  
martyrs.

The vague descriptions of exile and imprisonment, of pain and torture, are so easily exaggerated or softened by the pencil of an artful orator, that we are naturally induced to inquire into a fact of a more distinct and stubborn kind; the number of persons who suffered death in consequence of the edicts published by Diocletian, his associates, and his successors. The recent legends record whole armies and cities, which were at once swept away by the undistinguishing rage of persecution. The more ancient writers content themselves with pouring out a liberal effusion of loose and tragical invectives, without condescending to ascertain the precise number of those persons who were permitted to seal

seal with their blood their belief of the gospel. From the history of Eusebius, it may however be collected, that only nine bishops were punished with death; and we are assured, by his particular enumeration of the martyrs of Palestine, that no more than ninety-two Christians were entitled to that honourable appellation<sup>181</sup>. As we are unacquainted with the degree of episcopal zeal and courage which prevailed at that time, it is not in our power to draw any useful inferences from the former of these facts: but the latter may serve to justify a very important and probable conclusion. According to the distribution of Roman provinces, Palestine may be considered as the sixteenth part of the Eastern empire<sup>182</sup>; and

<sup>181</sup> Eusebius de Martyr. Palestin. c. 13. He closes his narration, by assuring us, that these were the martyrdoms inflicted in Palestine, during the *whole* course of the persecution. The vii chapter of his viiith book, which relates to the province of Thebais in Egypt may seem to contradict our moderate computation; but it will only lead us to admire the artful management of the historian. Chusing for the scene of the most exquisite cruelty the most remote and sequestered country of the Roman empire, he relates, that in Thebais from ten to one hundred persons had frequently suffered martyrdom in the same day. But when he proceeds to mention his own journey into Egypt, his language insensibly becomes more cautious and moderate. Instead of a large, but definite number, he speaks of many Christians ( πολλοί ); and most artfully selects two ambiguous words ( ἵστορησάμεν, and ὑπομεινάντας ), which may signify either what he had seen or what he had heard; either the expectation, or the execution, of the punishment. Having thus provided a secure evasion, he commits the equivocal passage to his readers and translators; justly conceiving that their piety would induce them to prefer the most favourable sense. There was perhaps some malice in the remark of Theodorus Metochita, that all who, like Eusebius, had been conversant with the Egyptians, delighted in an obscure and intricate style. (See Valesius ad loc.)

<sup>182</sup> When Palestine was divided into three, the præfecture of the East contained forty-eight provinces. As the ancient distinctions of nations

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and since there were some governors, who from a real or affected clemency had preserved their hands unstained with the blood of the faithful<sup>184</sup>, it is reasonable to believe, that the country which had given birth to Christianity produced at least the sixteenth part of the martyrs who suffered death within the dominions of Galerius and Maximin; the whole might consequently amount to about fifteen hundred, a number which, if it is equally divided between the ten years of the persecution, will allow an annual consumption of one hundred and fifty martyrs. Allotting the same proportion to the provinces of Italy, Africa, and perhaps Spain, where, at the end of two or three years, the rigour of the penal laws was either suspended or abolished, the multitude of Christians in the Roman empire, on whom a capital punishment was inflicted by a judicial sentence, will be reduced to somewhat less than two thousand persons. Since it cannot be doubted that the Christians were more numerous, and their enemies more exasperated, in the time of Diocletian, than they had ever been in any former persecution, this probable and moderate computation may teach us to estimate the number of primitive saints and martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the important purpose of introducing Christianity into the world.

nations were long since abolished, the Romans distributed the provinces, according to a general proportion of their extent and opulence.

<sup>184</sup> Ut gloriarı possint nullum se innocentiam peremisse, nam et ipse audivi aliquos gloriantes, quia administratio sua, in hac parte, fuerit incruenta. Lactant. Institut. Divin. v. 22.

We shall conclude this chapter by a melancholy truth, which obtrudes itself on the reluctant mind; that even admitting, without hesitation or inquiry, all that history has recorded, or devotion has feigned, on the subject of martyrdoms, it must still be acknowledged, that the Christians, in the course of their intestine dissensions, have inflicted far greater severities on each other, than they had experienced from the zeal of infidels. During the ages of ignorance which followed the subversion of the Roman empire in the West, the bishops of the Imperial city extended their dominion over the laity as well as clergy of the Latin church. The fabric of superstition which they had erected, and which might long have defied the feeble efforts of reason, was at length assaulted by a crowd of daring fanatics, who, from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, assumed the popular character of reformers. The church of Rome defended by violence the empire which she had acquired by fraud; a system of peace and benevolence was soon disgraced by proscriptions, wars, massacres, and the institution of the holy office. And as the reformers were animated by the love of civil, as well as of religious freedom, the Catholic princes connected their own interest with that of the clergy, and enforced by fire and the sword the terrors of spiritual censures. In the Netherlands alone, more than one hundred thousand of the subjects of Charles the Fifth are said to have suffered by the hand of the executioner; and this extraordinary number is attested by

CHAP. by Grotius<sup>185</sup>, a man of genius and learning,  
 XVI. who preserved his moderation amidst the fury of  
 contending sects, and who composed the annals  
 of his own age and country, at a time when the  
 invention of printing had facilitated the means  
 of intelligence, and increased the danger of  
 detection. If we are obliged to submit our belief  
 to the authority of Grotius, it must be allowed,  
 that the number of Protestants, who were exe-  
 cuted in a single province and a single reign, far  
 exceeded that of the primitive martyrs in the  
 space of three centuries, and of the Roman em-  
 pire. But if the improbability of the fact itself  
 should prevail over the weight of evidence; if  
 Grotius should be convicted of exaggerating the  
 merit and sufferings of the Reformers<sup>186</sup>; we  
 shall be naturally led to inquire what confidence  
 can be placed in the doubtful and imperfect  
 monuments of ancient credulity; what degree of  
 credit can be assigned to a courtly bishop, and  
 a passionate declaimer, who, under the protec-  
 tion of Constantine, enjoyed the exclusive privi-  
 lege of recording the persecutions inflicted on the  
 Christians by the vanquished rivals or disregarded  
 predecessors of their gracious sovereign.

<sup>185</sup> Grot. *Annal. de Rebus Belgicis*, l. i. p. 12. Edit. fol.

<sup>186</sup> Fra-Paolo (*Historia del Concilio Tridentino*, l. iii.) reduces the  
 number of Belgic martyrs to 50,000. In learning and moderation,  
 Fra-Paolo was not inferior to Grotius. The priority of time gives  
 some advantage to the evidence of the former, which he loses on the  
 other hand by the distance of Venice from the Netherlands.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.









AUG 16 1929

